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PALMIRA

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A Novel,
IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY MRS. MEEKE,
AUTHOR OF
COUNT ST. BLANCARD.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE, AT THE
Minerva-Press,
LEADENHALL-STREET.

M.DCC.XCVII.



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AND

ERMAMCE

2 BOOKS

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BY MISS MERRIS

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CHAP. I.

IN the year 1776, a family of the name of Melac came to reside in Dunkirk, a well-known trading town in French Flanders, the head of which had spent the prime of his life in Gaudaloupe, where he had acquired a very handsome fortune in

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trade

trade, and was now come to enjoy the fruits of his industry in his native country. The excellent character he bore in the island had strongly recommended him to the notice of the then governor, who had entrusted him with some dispatches of importance to deliver to the minister upon his arrival at Paris, whither he bent his steps as soon as he landed ; and, during several interviews he had with the Comptroller-general, upon the subject of the letters he had brought over, he rose so much in that gentleman's esteem, and seemed so competent a judge of the French finances, that he offered him several places in his gift ; wishing, as he told him, to make his talents useful to the community in general.

So flattering an idea made a forcible impression upon the generous mind of Mr. de Melac, who, having for many years been accustomed to a very active line of life, already began to find his time hang heavy upon his hands ; he therefore, without hesi-

tation, accepted the place of Receiver-general of Dunkirk, for which place he immediately set out with his family.

His wife had been dead some years, and had left him one son and two daughters.— A lady, whose rare accomplishments were her least merit, had returned with him from Gaudaloupe. She had, since the death of his wife, acted in the double capacity of governess to his daughters, and superintendant of his family, and was still invested with the same powers. Mr. de Melac took up his abode in a large house annexed to his place, settled it upon liberal terms, and placed all his servants under the direction of Madame de Franval, of whom he entertained the highest opinion, and of whom his daughters were remarkably fond.

They continued their studies under her inspection, and the first masters the town afforded were engaged to instruct them in

the various female accomplishments Mr. de Melac thought necessary to complete their education.

Bazile, his son, was now in his nineteenth year. Naturally of a gay, nay even volatile disposition, he found himself quite in his element during his father's residence at Paris, where each succeeding day had been passed in planning amusements for the next, and he by no means relished the idea of taking up his abode in a paltry provincial town, chiefly inhabited, as he had been given to understand, by merchants of various nations, and inferior traders ; and, to add to his mortification, he was obliged to dedicate his mornings to his father's office ; for, when once Mr. de Melac had signified his will, he expected to be obeyed.

This truly-worthy man, for such he was in every sense of the word, had seen with regret the bent of his son's inclinations ; he had presided over his education himself, and

and few men were more capable of forming the youthful mind. He had concluded his arduous task, nearly completed before they left Gaudaloupe; and therefore, for a few months preceding their departure, owing to the multiplicity of his affairs, he had allowed his son to study or not, as it best suited him; and, during their stay in Paris, he had been in a great measure obliged to pursue the same method: Bazile therefore looked upon himself as emancipated from the restraints of adolescence, and perfectly qualified to play his part in the world.

He therefore no longer consulted his father about the employment of his time, the choice of his companions, or upon any one circumstance; and Mr. de Melac saw with the utmost sorrow, that six months residence in Paris would render wholly useless all the pains and expence he had bestowed upon his education; he was therefore by no means sorry so excellent an opportunity

portunity offered to retire from the scenes of dissipation Paris affords for the young and gay ; besides, the place he now held would enable him to oblige his son to devote at least some hours in the day to business, as he thought, and with very great justice, that habitual idleness enervates the faculties, and too often paves the way for guilty pleasures. He knew he could easily procure the reversion of this place for his son, to whom he meant to resign it as soon as he attained the years of discretion, as it would afford sufficient employ without fatiguing him, and a sufficient income to live very genteelly, independent of what he meant to do for him.

Bazile was not acquainted with the extent of his father's plan, nor, if he had, would he have been at all more reconciled to the alteration that had taken place in their manner of living.

When,

When they left Guadaloupe, he fully expected his father had wholly given up all thoughts of business ; he knew his fortune was sufficient to support the elegant stile they had lived in while at Paris, and he could not bear the avaricious plodding ideas which had, he presumed, induced him, though so little in want of such an increase to his income, to accept of a place which still kept him among the class of *bourgeois*.*

Till now he had never thought Mr. de Melac deficient in proper pride, therefore could the less account for his behaviour.—When he first learned his intentions, he ventured, for the first time in his life, to remonstrate with him upon the subject, and endeavoured by every persuasive method to prevent him from accepting what he looked upon as so mean an employment.

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Mr.

* *Citizens* ; the term distinguished Plebeians from Nobility.

Mr. de Melac, with that patience ever characteristic of a parent interested for the happiness and welfare of his children, listened to all he had to say with the utmost attention, desirous to discover how far his wishes coincided with his own.

Bazile, encouraged by the kind looks of his father, mentioned his various objections to his plan, and proceeded to advise him to purchase some post about the court, which would raise him above the class of plebeians; that, for his own part, he particularly wished to enter the army, which afforded quite sufficient employment in time of peace, and the means of immortalizing the name of every brave man in time of war.

When he ceased speaking, Mr. de Melac said very coolly, "Bought honours seldom render a man more respectable in the eyes of sensible people, Bazile; and I am not anxious to try the experiment. If we do
our

our duty, we may ennoble any station, and any employment. That of Receiver-general is both honourable and lucrative, and now seldom bestowed but upon men of known probity; my character therefore will not suffer from my accepting such a post.

“Were I to agree to your wishes, and allow you to enter the army, I am perfectly sensible what would be the consequence of my folly, and have little doubt, from the natural warmth of your temper, you would get yourself run through the body in the course of a month. Your birth does not entitle you to mix with the young French nobility who command our armies, therefore pray endeavour to content yourself with following my example; and, believe me, I shall be infinitely more flattered to find your name placed among the class of good men and honest citizens, than among those of the greatest heroes this country ever produced.

—“*Chacun à son métier*”† is an old but ex-

B 5

cellent

† Every one to his calling.

cellent proverb, Bazile, which I beg you will bear in mind."

Thus the discourse dropped, and a few days afterwards the whole family set out for Dunkirk, and Bazile was installed in his new employment. His only consolation was, his father, by way of encouragement, annexed a very handsome salary to his place, and constituted him his head clerk,—a title he would very readily have dispensed with, and which he changed into that of deputy.

Next to pleasure, dress had been his greatest study during his stay in Paris ; and, as he particularly wished to be distinguished, he followed all the reigning fashions with the most scrupulous exactness, and, after his arrival at Dunkirk, frequently had the satisfaction of hearing himself remarked as the smart Bourgeois,—the young Receiver-general,—the handsome Melac !

He

He was far from a bad figure, and his countenance was very animated, and particularly pleasing when he was in a good humour. At first he was rather flattered, when he overheard any of these expressions, but he soon, like all other new comers, ceased to excite notice : he began to discover neither his elegant dress nor handsome figure procured him admittance among the Flemish nobility resident either in or near Dunkirk ; and, as the officers, belonging to the different regiments in garrison, were never in any of his father's parties, he had no opportunity of courting their friendship ; he was reduced to seek therefore for companions among the different merchants' sons with whose fathers Mr. de Melac began to associate.

This was the society he had been accustomed to since his birth ; but at Paris he had frequently been in company with people of the first distinction, who had treated his father as their equal, and him with the

utmost politeness; to be therefore thus, once more, reduced to a level with people who had their fortune to make, through his father's absurd wish to increase his income, provoked him excessively; however, as there was no remedy but patience, and he reflected he should not always be in leading strings, he endeavoured to submit to his present mortifications, and was half-reconciled to his situation by the reasoning of some young Englishmen, whose fathers were established in different branches of trade at Dunkirk, to whom he had been early introduced.

These gentlemen had much to say in favour of their different lines of business, and all seriously assured Bazile they looked upon themselves as infinitely superior to the generality of the nobility of the town, whose pride made their known poverty more conspicuous.

Ernestine,

Ernestine, his eldest sister, was between sixteen and seventeen, and was free from Bazile's ambitious notions. Her father's conduct was always her example, as she was convinced from her late mother's and Madame de Franval's remarks, that his actions were always regulated by the strictest propriety.

Her disposition was remarkably amiable, her temper uniformly good, and her manners cheerful and unaffected.—Mr. de Melac saw with delight her growing virtues, and sincerely wished she might captivate some worthy man, capable of appreciating her merit.

While Madame de Franval looked forward with regret to this natural period of their separation, Clemence, the younger sister, was just turned of fourteen, and possessed, to use a French expression, all the *naïveté et l'heureuse simplicité de son âge*; remarkably lively, and very clever, she was
her

her father's favourite, and could take much greater liberties with him than either Bazile or Ernestine dare.

Her youth gave her a sort of privilege, and she often amused Madame de Franval and Ernestine with Bazile's ambitious notions, as she was in some measure his confidante, and often affected to give into his way of thinking, on purpose to have the pleasure of laughing at his folly, and of mimicking his airs and gestures, before her sister and governess.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

SOON after their arrival in Flanders, Mr. de Melac, having settled all his private affairs, told Madam de Franval and his children he was going to pay their maternal grandmother a visit, and meant, if possible to prevail on her to take up her abode near them.

She would certainly enjoy their society, and they would thus have it in their power to contribute greatly to her happiness.—

The

The young ladies perfectly agreed with their father, but Bazile thought it was a very absurd notion, as he had learned that his grandfather, once a respectable merchant of Havre de Grace, had failed in business just before he died, and had left his widow in the greatest poverty ; indeed she had, since this event, been wholly supported by her daughter.

Her age precluded her undertaking a sea voyage to see her grandchildren, and she now resided in a convent near Rouen, which was the fittest place for her he thought ; for what honour would her being thus unnecessarily brought forward do either him or his sisters ; and, as she had nothing to leave behind her, he could not see the necessity of courting her favour.

He was prudent enough to keep these reflections to himself ; merely upon his father's saying he hoped he would be particularly diligent and attentive in his office during

during his absence, he inquired when he meant to return?

That would depend wholly upon circumstances, Mr. de Melac said, unwilling to satisfy his curiosity, or to allow him time to give way to his natural propensity for dissipation, by fancying himself secure.

In less than a fortnight he returned with Madame des Ormes, the lady in question, whom he immediately introduced to his children in the kindest manner.

Bazile felt neither veneration for her grey locks, nor pity for her dependent situation. The simplicity of her dress and manners displeased him, and he could not feel any respect for a person who lived upon his father's bounty; yet few people had been more deservedly loved in prosperity, or more generally pitied when in adversity.— Madame des Ormes needed only to be known to be esteemed. She had long had a very high opinion of Mr. de Melac, and
his

his generous manners had induced her instantly to close with what she termed his benign and considerate proposal. She wept over her three grandchildren, and called down blessings upon their heads,—discovered great likenesses between them and their father and mother, and concluded with a prayer for their future welfare.

Ernestine and Clemence gave her a most cordial welcome, and Bazile, knowing his father's eyes were upon him, tried to follow their example; and, during three weeks that Madame des Ormes continued an inmate of his father's house, he forced himself to behave to her with some degree of politeness, and, in his father's presence, with respect.

At the expiration of this time, this respectable amiable woman took possession of a small house which Mr. de Melac had fitted up for her in a pleasant village within two miles of Dunkirk, where they all promised

promised to visit her often. Indeed, Ernestine and Clemence were very fond of her, and, as it was only a pleasant evening's walk, seldom let two days elapse without calling upon her, and were always attended either by their father, who treated the good lady with the utmost kindness, or Madame de Franval, who was no less polite.

Bazile was astonished at his sister's evident partiality for their grandmother, whom he looked upon as a disgrace to their family, and felt very angry with his father for bringing her to expose *her* poverty; he said, and the lowness of *their* origin to all their new friends.

In common with his sisters, he presumed his father was a man of family; indeed it was generally believed in Gaudaloupe some youthful folly had induced him to leave France, and settle in that island, as his manners were those of a man who had been early accustomed to the first society. His
figure

figure was particularly striking, and his conversation and various accomplishments had convinced all his acquaintance he must have received an excellent education. Of the latter no one was more convinced than Bazile, who had often regretted his father was so excellent a scholar himself, as it enabled him so much the easier to discover his deficiencies in any science Mr. de Melac chose he should study ; but thinking as he did, respecting his father's family, he wondered he had not thought proper to introduce him and his sisters to some of his relations, instead of bringing *la mere des Ormes*, as he usually called his grandmother, from her obscure retreat, where she was certainly taken proper care of, and wanted for nothing.

Though he would have been among the first to have reprobated his father's squandering away his money upon an old woman, he wondered Mr. de Melac had not placed her household upon a more respectable footing.

ing. To put her in a cottage, with a single Flemish peasant to wait upon her, was truly absurd, he told his sisters.

Ernestine advised him very seriously to set about a reform in his own manners, before he ventured to criticise his father's actions, who had been solely guided in this affair by the wishes of Madame des Ormes, and she was neither so fond of shew or luxury as he seemed to be. She had now all the comforts of life, enjoyed the society of her grandchildren, and repeatedly assured both them and Mr. de Melac, she had never been happier in her life. Still Bazile was far from satisfied, when he reflected it would soon be generally known that *la mere des Ormes* was his grandmother, and for the present determined never to mention her name among his acquaintance.

Every Sunday Mr. de Melac's carriage went to fetch the good old lady to dine with them, and on that day he seldom received

ceived any other company. Clemence diverted the good lady by her arch drollery, and Ernestine amused her by her lively conversation, while their love and respect increased for her every succeeding visit, as they soon discovered the excellence of her principles and disposition, and found her, though naturally of a serious turn of mind, pious without the smallest tincture of bigotry.

Mr. de Melac's society was soon sought by men of every rank. Real merit, when not obscured by poverty, is sure to be noticed; therefore, had it been his wish, he could very soon have introduced Bazile to the first company Dunkirk afforded; but this was by no means his aim. His son's greatest failing was vanity, and he rather sought to lower his pride; he wished Bazile to shine among his equals, but not to court the fickle favour of the great. Still he as strictly forbid his falling into the other extreme, as low companions were, and
even

even more likely to corrupt his mind and disposition : and he knew him to be very open to flattery.

Bazile still obeyed him, but no longer with either cheerfulness or alacrity ; his submission to his will was become the result of fear. Mr. de Melac saw he had lost ground in his affections since their arrival in France : still, as he knew himself to be in the right, he strictly persevered in his plan, though he continued to allow his son every reasonable indulgence, and treated him in every respect with the utmost confidence.

It had been his maxim to bind him (as Rousseau advises) in imperceptible chains. Bazile's fickle disposition, and the natural instability of his mind, had occasioned the failure of his plan. Still he wished, if possible, to veil every act of paternal authority under the name of friendship ; he therefore, and with good reason, attributed the restraint

straint he imposed upon him to his solicitude for his welfare.

Sundays Bazile had to himself, and on that day he took care to make himself remarked, wherever he went, by his shewy appearance. He always attended the *Parade*; but was obliged, much against his will and pride, in conformity to his father's strict orders, to attend Madam de Franval and his sisters to high mass at their parish-church; from thence, to make himself some amends, he generally went to the military mass of one or other of the regiments, and the best band of music was sure to attract his attention. Indeed the latter religious ceremony is particularly adapted for soldiers.

The chaplain of the regiment says his mass at the altar, while the band plays a series of lively airs, sometimes marches,—and often catches and glees,—and, in less than twenty minutes, the whole is over.—

Still

Still, the churches set apart for this service are generally more crowded than any of the others; as the officers are mostly all men of rank, and never absent themselves from this part of their duty. The fashionable people of the town they inhabit usually prefer the military service to any other; and it was precisely among this set Bazile wished to shine and display his dress and figure to the greatest advantage.

CHAP. III.

IT was now the beginning of July, and the weather was remarkably warm, when, one Sunday morning during breakfast, upon Clemence having remarked Bazile seemed to have been taking uncommon pains at his toilette, he drew himself up with an air of self-approbation, and said, "If you are very good, Clemence, perhaps I may take you with me this morning."

"How kind!" said the laughing girl. "But, pray, who is to be my judge upon this important occasion? and where are you going?"

"Upon the parade. Half the town will be assembled there at ten, to see the regiment of cavalry that came in yesterday."

"Oh!

“ Oh ! I dare say it will be a very fine fight,” said Clemence ;—“ but had you asked Madame de Franval and Ernestine to have joined our party, I should have been still more flattered by this distinguished proof of your politeness and condescension.”

Mr. de Melac gave Clemence a smile of approbation ; then said, “ If I knew any ladies who were going upon the parade, I might permit your sisters to accompany you, Bazile ; but young women, who are so little known as they are, and who have no chance of meeting with any great respect from my rank in life, are very apt to be insulted by the inferior officers,—while their superiors would very justly, whether they knew you or not, think both them and you beneath their notice ; your shewy dress will not inspire men of real consequence with either awe or respect. You know I have always advised you to conform in that particular to your station in life : hitherto my remonstrances have been of little avail ; but believe me, men of sense, of every rank, are

sure to laugh at frivolous coxcombs;— therefore, let me entreat you would not take such extraordinary pains to deserve the appellation.”

Bazile wished his tongue had been tied before he had afforded his father such an opportunity to moralize. He wished to have defended his conduct; but fearful any reply would only prove the forerunner of a fresh lecture, he left the room in silence; and, at the accustomed hour, attended his sisters to church.

During their walk thither, they met several of the officers belonging to the newly-arrived regiment. Bazile was particularly struck with their elegant uniform. They were hussars, which dress, and their handsome caps, gave them a very martial appearance. He stopped his sisters several times to make the same remark; then asked them if they did not think such a dress would become him extremely.

Clemence

Clemence said she thought it would, with the addition of whiskers and stilts,—as his countenance was at present too effeminate, and he was rather too short to appear to great advantage as a hussar.

Madame des Franval and Ernestine laughed; and both seriously advised him, since he was so partial to regimentals, to get himself inrolled among the militia.

He could hardly listen to the proposal with common patience; but determined in his own mind to do all in his power to cultivate the acquaintance of these newcomers, and to get admitted, if possible, into so respectable a corps. Hitherto three regiments of infantry had composed the garrison of Dunkirk; and Bazile had particularly envied the dress of the different officers belonging to them; but these cavaliers pleased him infinitely more;—they struck him as being little short of demi-gods; and he was convinced they

were heroes. He was glad when mas was over; as he was anxious to get rid of his sisters, that he might take his usual ramble, and display his elegant person upon the ramparts, and elsewhere.

Just as they reached their own door, he met a young man he distinguished by the title of friend, who was one of his particular favourites,—though he was by no means a companion his father would have chosen for him;—indeed Bazile was so conscious of this, that he never asked Berenger to their house: still, they usually met once, and sometimes twice, a day, at different places. Berenger was certainly as great, or rather more a fop than himself; but infinitely his inferior in every other respect: he was head clerk to one of the principal wine merchants in the town, and a complete adept in the art of flattering those whose purses were better supplied than his own;—indeed, his yearly stipend was all laid out in clothes. Bazile was happy to see him; and, understanding he

he was going upon the parade, and from thence to military masfs, he took his arm, and quitted his sisters, who were totally unacquainted with his companion. Berenger paid him some very acceptable compliments upon his dress and looks,—wondered Mr. de Melac did not place him in some line that would entitle him to wear a sword—a distinction confined to the nobility and military in a provincial town, but worn indiscriminately at Paris by all ranks. There, of course, few people of fashion display them, except when full dressed; but, in most other towns, those that possess this privilege, sport them from morning till night. Bazile sighed at Berenger's remark, and then reverted to the hussars he had been so struck with. Berenger agreed with him in every respect, and they determined to go to their masfs.

When they reached the large square, where the troops were always exercised, they were informed, to their no small disappointment,

ment, the cavalry had made way for the infantry. This proved to be a mistake in some respects:—the new comers were all under arms; but, as had been said, were now on foot. The square was amazingly crowded with all the fashionable people in the town. Bazile and his friend tried to advance thro' the throng; but dress, as Mr. de Melac had told him, will not always procure respect; still, as they neither of them wanted assurance, they with some difficulty forced their way into the centre of the square, where they could have a very good view of the troops. Bazile cast his eyes round, and bowed to all those he knew, whom he thought worthy such a mark of his attention,—when a general buzz of “Here he comes! here he comes!” caught his ear; and he perceived the crowd,—far more polite than they had been to Berenger and him a few minutes before,—make way immediately for about a dozen officers of the first distinction, who were advancing. At their head came a young man about four and twenty, whose
dress

dress informed the spectators he was the Colonel Commandant of the lately arrived regiment. He was near six feet high, rather stout, and seemed formed for the distinguished post he held; his countenance, though placid was very expressive, and remarkably interesting;—fine dark eyes, good hair, and a very regular set of teeth, formed a *toute ensemble* truly striking to the numerous beholders,—and every person seemed to pay him an involuntary tribute of admiration as he passed; and his politeness to all those who were eager to facilitate his progress, and break the way for him, appeared to make a very strong impression upon their minds, and to redouble the efforts they made to convince him of their respect. As this was the first time he had appeared in public since his arrival, as soon as he had passed the crowd, before he turned towards his men, he looked round him, and made a general bow to the surrounding multitude,—who were very loud in their praises of his fine manly figure; and Bazile, though he thought
few

few people equalled himself in these respects, was forced to subscribe to the truth of these remarks. However, like many more, he was very anxious to learn the name of this much-admired officer, and addressed all he knew for that purpose; but none were able to satisfy his curiosity,—which increased so much by these difficulties, that he actually addressed one of the officers in the young gentleman's suite, and made the same inquiry, who very politely replied, "The Duke de Civrac, Sir."

"The Duke de Civrac!" he repeated, sufficiently loud for many of the spectators to profit by the information he had received. "How I should glory in commanding so many brave fellows," said he to Berenger. "I would march up to the very mouth of a cannon, if such an action would procure me such a rank in the army."

"You might get into one," said a gentleman who stood near him, "before you would become such a figure as the Colonel, young man."

Bazile

Bazile looked round him, and was very much hurt, both by what he termed a very impertinent remark, and by the familiar appellation of *young man*, so freely bestowed upon him.

All those who thought themselves entitled, advanced to pay their respects to the young Duke, who received every one with the greatest affability; and each, when they retired, seemed equally satisfied with him and themselves;—not always the case upon such occasions, though both parties are often at a loss to know where the fault lies.

As soon as this ceremony was over, the Duke walked along the line; and, when he addressed his men, (while many of the spectators observed, he seemed born to command) his voice was loud and articulate, and at the same time melodious. If he reprimanded, it was in the gentlest accents; and his men were so fond of him, they all dreaded to offend him;—not through any fears of

the usual military punishments upon such occasions—their strict obedience was the result of far nobler sentiments. Having spent about ten minutes giving orders, the Duke marched, at the head of his regiment, to the church of the Carmelite Friars, where mass was immediately begun by the chaplain.

Bazile was foremost in the crowd that followed;—indeed the church had seldom or ever been so full before. Military mass is generally looked upon as a sort of farce upon religion—a mere mummary. The officers condescend to connive at it as a part of their service; but the Duke de Civrac approached the altar, as he would have done his Maker, with true reverence; and his officers all followed his example. Not a word was spoken by either them or any of their men during the service, which was near a third longer than the astonished multitude had been accustomed to upon such occasions; and the band played only sacred music.

music. Those who came prepared as usual to laugh, slipped out of the church when all was over, very much disappointed and ashamed : so striking are the effects of example ; and a great man certainly has it in his power to do much good, or much harm, by his own behaviour in such circumstances. The Duke seemed actuated by true devotion, and totally free from affectation ; and mass thus performed, with all military pomp and ceremony, was truly edifying. His Grace left the church with several superior officers belonging to the different regiments of infantry, who had accompanied him from the parade, out of compliment to his rank, and who were inwardly ashamed of the little respect they had hitherto paid to so sacred a duty.

Bazile and Berenger communicated their thoughts to each other, but neither could ridicule or laugh at unaffected piety ; and Bazile thought, if he could but gain admittance

tance into this regiment, he should soon be as great a man as the Colonel.

The moment he reached home, he began to launch out in praise of the Duke de Civrac, and to repeat the various encomiums he had heard bestowed upon him.

“ Oh ! he is more than mortal, I find, by your account,” said Mr. de Melac, smiling at his warmth. Madame de Franval hoped he meant to profit by so excellent an example, which seemed to have made a deep impression upon his mind.

Bazile perfectly understood this allusion, as he was in general not particularly attentive during divine service, therefore did not chuse to debate the point with her ; and Mr. de Melac asked him how he meant to dispose of his evening ; adding, “ I am going to dine with your grandmother : it is the ducasse or fete of her village ; therefore, if you are not otherwise engaged, you may as

well accompany your sisters and Madame de Franval, who mean to drink their coffee with the old lady ;—so large a party would have deranged her at dinner ; but she will be very glad to see you in the afternoon.”

This was a request Bazile perfectly understood ; and it was so simple and so reasonable, he could not start a single objection to the proposal ;—though he had promised Berenger to accompany him to the play, where they both presumed was the greatest likelihood of again seeing the Duke de Civrac. He paused, wondered he had not heard of the fête, and supposed there would be a great deal of company as the day was fine, then said he should certainly give up an engagement he had formed to attend his sisters, and pay his respects to his grandmother.

Mr. de Melac was pleased at his ready acquiescence to his will ; and having desired them to order the carriage to fetch them home in the evening, set out on foot for Madame des Ormes.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

THE young people and Madame de Fraval dined by themselves. Bazile reflected with some regret upon the promise he had made his father, as he was fearful this fete would discover his relationship to the good old lady: however, he consoled himself with reflecting his presence would not accelerate that event; for, were his sisters questioned, they would certainly say who the good woman was; and, if his friends did make any remarks, he must tell her story in the most favourable way. Her style of living he meant to impute to avarice, and a wish to leave the more behind her when she died; and, her seeing no company to her pride, which would not permit her to associate with her inferiors.

Having

Having thus settled matters in his own mind, he set out with his sisters and Madame de Franval between three and four. Clemence remarked this was the first time since their arrival in France, he had honoured them so far, and protested she was very happy he had taken so much pains upon the occasion. He said he thought nothing looked so absurd, as to see a man escorting marriageable sisters about; if his father allowed them to mix more with the world, they would not want for beaux upon such occasions.

“Till now,” said Clemence, “I did not know I was of such consequence. However, I hope, if we do meet any body, they will know you are my brother; for I would not have any one suppose you were my lover for the world.”

“And pray why, Madame Clemence?” said Bazile?

“Because you are infinitely too much of a fop; and they would certainly form a very disadvantageous opinion of my taste.”

Ernestine

Ernestine and Madame de Franval laughed; and Bazile affected to join in their mirth,—though he did not relish the farcism.

When they reached Madame des Ormes, they found her seated in a little alcove in the front of her house, which was situated in the centre of the village, and had a neat grass plat opposite the door; upon which a crowd of peasants were assembled, dancing to the sound of a pipe and tabor and two fiddles. Every countenance was exhilarated with a smile, and the spectators all seemed to enjoy the festive scene.

Madame des Ormes had always been partial to rural amusements, though she had never constantly resided in the country. The moment she caught sight of her grandchildren, she rose to meet them, and gave them a most cordial welcome, particularly Bazile; who, as she observed, was the greatest stranger.

Mr.

Mr. de Melac had joined a party of his friends from Dunkirk. His surgeon, a droll, good-tempered man, who had made a fortune by his talents : his two nephews, smart young fellows, who trod in his steps ; and his niece, a pretty amiable-girl, about Ernestine's age ; with whom he now approached Madame des Ormes and her children.

Vanval, the surgeon, was a stout, short figure, and had upon this grand occasion (having dined at the *baillis*, or steward to the lord of the manor) adorned himself in his gala suit ; which consisted of a scarlet coat, gold-worked buttons, lined with white satin ; a ditto embroidered waistcoat ; black silk breeches and stockings ; amazing long worked ruffles ; and an immense triangular cocked hat, which he carried under his arm.

“ Mercy upon me, Mr. Vanval,” said Bazile, as he advanced, “ you really make me

me perspire to look at you. How can you wear scarlet and satin in such weather?"

"*Parbleu!* Mr. Bazile," said the surgeon, laughing, "I don't pay so much attention to the seasons as you do. This has been my best suit these five years, and it was made in winter: the next I have shall be for the summer;—but I am too old to stand upon punctilio."

"And when you was young, my good friend," said Mr. de Melac, "you attended to something of more importance than drefs."

Bazile, by way of atoning for his impertinent remark, offered his hand to Vanval's niece. Her brothers led out Ernestine and Clemence; and, by way of completing the set, the surgeon entreated Madame des Franval to do him the same honour.

Mr. de Melac, who enjoyed seeing his children engaged in any innocent diversion, brought Madame des Ormes to witness the

gay

gay scene, who was excessively flattered by the marked attention he always paid her. Bazile felt very little so, by the encomiums the amiable woman bestowed upon his performance, and began to repent he had given her such an opportunity to display the goodness of her heart. The surgeon's family had seen her before ;—besides, Vanval was a weak, illiterate being, who thought it his duty to provide for poor relations, and was commonly surrounded by needy nephews and nieces, and a stupid, half-ideot sister, whom he totally supported, kept his house ; therefore, he knew it would not be prudent to mention his sentiments concerning his grandmother before them.

During these reflections, he perceived several of the officers he had admired so much in the morning advancing towards them on horseback. He wondered what could have brought them ;—they were certainly not come to the ducaffe ; but, perhaps, they were only taking an evening's ride.

ride. He threw the cotillion into confusion—his attention was so much engrossed by the horsemen, and made a sudden stop, when he discovered the Duke de Civrac in the first who approached, mounted upon a very fine charger. His partner and his sisters called to him to go on ; but Bazile, ashamed to be seen dancing with a little *bourgeoise*, dressed in the most simple style, and at a village wake, by people with whom he was so anxious to become acquainted, would instantly, could he have devised any excuse, have withdrawn from the throng,—convinced that the Duke, in particular, who had looked at him several times in the morning, would set him down for a *low fellow* beneath his notice.

Clemence and Mademoiselle de Vanval could not bear to be thus stopped ; they therefore dragged Bazile about, till they roused him from his reverie ; but before he could recover himself, the Duke was close to them,
and

and instantly checked his horse, while he contemplated the dancers.

Bazile never stood so low in his own opinion, nor ever felt more mortified. His Grace seemed excessively pleased, and began to talk to several of the elder peasants, who were among the spectators. They all knew he must be a man of rank; and, in a few minutes, his title became generally known. The bailli no sooner heard so great a man was in the village, than he hastened towards him with all speed. His neighbours made way for him; and, according to the custom of the country, he entreated that Monseigneur would honour his cottage with his presence.

His Grace, ever willing to oblige, and delighted to study human nature in every station, with an affability which gained him the warm heart of the Flemish bailiff, instantly alighted, saying, "So kind an offer ought not to meet with a refusal; should it, Marquis?"

Marquis ?" turning to the major of his regiment, who had accompanied him, with a young cadet under the Duke's immediate protection.

"Certainly not," said the Major, following the Duke's example, as did the cadet.

Their horses were given to the grooms : they took a turn round the green, and were then very ceremoniously ushered into the Baillis house, and into a large room, where stood a table that reached from one end to the other, covered with various eatables, and several bowls, in which were different wines, mixed according to people's tastes ; as negus, &c. A large arm chair stood at the upper end, of which his Grace was entreated to take possession.

"Upon my word," said the Duke, "this is true hospitality."

"Allow me to set something which has not been touched before, your Grace," said the
the

the bailli; "you are perhaps a stranger to our Flemish customs. This table remains covered for three days for all comers, without distinction; there are no limits to our noble Seigneur's generosity; no one is obliged to me, your Grace,—I only do my duty."

Hams, tongues, a variety of cakes and tarts, peculiar to the country, were already set out. His Grace was delighted with the appearance, and told the Bailli they should fare very well:—soldiers ought not to be difficult. But as this was the first day of the *fête*, the larder was plentifully supplied; and several cold things were immediately brought and placed before the Duke and his companions; such as savoury pies, pigeons, and ducks in jelly, marbled veal, &c.

The three gentlemen had not long dined; but determined to do all the honour they could to the good man's repast. As soon as he placed every thing of the best

upon the table, and three or four bottles of wine, the Bailli hurried away in search of Mr. de Melac, with whom he had become very intimate, since Madame des Ormes's residence in the village. He found him among the spectators talking to the surgeon, with whom the Bailli had long been intimate.

“For heaven's sake, gentlemen,” he said, “accompany me home; you know not what distinguished visitors I have got, and how ill qualified I am to entertain them.”

Neither Mr. de Melac nor the surgeon had been very near the Duke when he alighted; and were agreeing they would take another look at him when he came out of the house, as they did not chuse to go in to stare at him; but this was a fair opportunity the surgeon thought, who protested dancing had made him thirsty, and he was just coming in search of a glass of negus. The Bailli was for hurrying them along immediately

mediately; but Mr. de Melac said, the Duke would very likely be offended at their thus forcing themselves into his company.

“I am convinced you need not be under any such apprehensions,” said Vanval. “The Bailli, and his Grace’s countenance, have strangely deceived me, if he is not one of the best tempered men in the world; besides, I have told him my house is free for all comers; and, as you have been a great traveller, Mr. de Melac, you are most likely to amuse such a man.

Curiosity now induced Mr. de Melac to comply with the Bailli’s request; and interest made the surgeon joyfully close with the proposal. They therefore followed him home.

The Bailli never spoke till he got to the door of the room, in which the strangers were sitting: he then thus began—“Sen-
D 2 fible

fible of my own deficiency, your Grace, I have brought two of my friends, who are come from Dunkirk to the *fête*, both travelled and learned men, to come and thank your Grace, in my name, for the supreme honour you have done my poor cottage.”

The old surgeon thought this learned harangue infinitely too prolix,—which, he presumed, had been composed during their silent walk towards the house; he therefore gave the Bailli a pinch, to induce him to bring it to a conclusion,—which the Duke discovered, from the movement of his hand, and could hardly conceal a smile. When they entered, the Duke was seated near one of the windows; and, the weather being very warm, had taken off his cap, which laid by him. De Melac and Vanval made a sort of awkward *entree*, owing to the Bailli’s curious introduction of them, and to his moving first on one side, then on the other; to let them pass; at last De Melac was able to advance to pay his compliments.

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The Duke had rose, and was standing to receive them; but, the moment De Melac looked him in the face, he seemed riveted to the spot, where he had stopped for some seconds before he could either bow or take his eyes off his face. This was the first time he had ever felt at all embarrassed in the presence of any man, and even now he was at a loss to define his feelings: his countenance varied several times, while he tried to repair his first want of politeness, by bowing a second time; but involuntarily he allowed his eyes to remain longer than they ought to have done fixed upon the Duke; he once more withdrew them, and tried to pay his compliments; but fancied he succeeded worse than Vanval would have done in a similar situation—so very much dissatisfied with himself. He tried to make way for the surgeon, who was always the same in all company, and equally at his ease; as he never intended or thought he could offend, he seldom or ever did: he bowed with the utmost respect, and was

equally favoured, as Mr. de Melac had been, with a polite return of the compliment. But, as De Melac still seemed very much confused, which the Duke solely attributed to their strange introduction, the Surgeon, by way of relieving his friend, and setting all to rights, said, "I am afraid, Monseigneur, you have not formed a very high opinion of Flemish politeness; but the Bailli has said so much in mine and my friend's praise, we are both afraid we shall fall very short of your Grace's expectations."

The humble look that accompanied this speech, and the honest frankness a very plain countenance expressed, prepossessed the Duke greatly in favour of the speaker. An expressive smile convinced Vanval he had succeeded; and a polite entreaty that they would join the party, set De Melac quite at his ease,—though he could not refrain from taking another side glance at the Duke while

while he was seating himself. The Surgeon perceived something had struck him; and, with a bluntness he seldom tried to check, having first looked at the Duke, and then at De Melac, said, "Your Grace must forgive me; but I protest I never saw so strong a family likeness between any two people as between you and my friend here; and I appeal to those gentlemen for the truth of my observation;—if Mr. De Melac had not been a very handsome man, I should not have spoken my sentiments so freely.

The Duke smiled, and, looking at De Melac, who was more confused than ever, said, "Far from being offended, Sir, I think you have paid me a very high compliment; for I really never saw a gentleman I should more wish to resemble than your friend."

The Major made the same remark, and protested the likeness had struck him the moment he saw Mr. de Melac.

Mr. de Melac having rather recovered himself, said he ought to feel highly flattered, particularly by what his Grace had said ; and all he could say in extenuation of his friend's rudeness was, that he was a Flamand, and had no intention to offend.—As this was said in a joke, they laughed, and the Surgeon was pleased. The conversation now turned upon rural amusements,—of which the Duke professed himself a great admirer ; and said there were few sights he enjoyed so much as the village feasts or wakes in the South of France ; and, though he looked upon the French peasants to be in some respects poorer than those of many other countries, still he was convinced they were the happiest set of people upon earth : their toils during the week were all forgot in a dance on Sunday. “ But these Flemish *car-mess* or *ducafes*'s only occur once a year, I think, Sir,” turning to the Surgeon.

“ No oftener. The peasantry about here are among the poorest class, yet they often dance on a Sunday.”

“ My

"My house is in Burgundy," said the Duke, "and there I have frequently joined in the evening revels. The peasants of that province are comparatively rich; and they seem more lively, and look more healthy than I have seen on this side of Paris. During the vintage, they work and sing all day, and conclude the evening with a dance,—which, they have often assured me, makes them forget their fatigues. The Flamands, I believe, may dispute the palm for honesty with any country."

"I believe it, Sir," said the Surgeon; "but I must acknowledge they are rather lazy and dirty."

The Duke smiled; and the Surgeon begged leave to drink his health."

The Duke readily returned the compliment; and then, turning to Mr. de Melac, whom Valvan was talking with about Guadaloupe, asked him how this cold part of

France agreed with him, after having resided in the West-Indies?

“I have an excellent constitution, said De Melac: “no climate disagrees with me, if I can but take plenty of exercise, and reside in a tolerably airy situation, which is my case at present.”

“I own,” said the Duke, “I think any of our provinces preferable to the capital;—indeed I am particularly partial to rustic amusements. At Paris I always get lazy; and the mind, as well as the body, becomes enervated, I am convinced, by incessant dissipation; and I am obliged, in some respects, to be like other people—at least during the winter months.”

De Melac had expected some very different observations, as he had often heard men, much his Grace's inferiors in point of rank, complain bitterly of the *ennui* of a garrison town;—indeed, he had heard many of fashion say, it was impossible to exist out of Paris;

Paris ; but this gentleman seemed superior to all kind of affectation.

As they sat near a window, they had a very good view of the sports upon the green.

“ I think I saw you dancing, Sir,” said the Duke, looking at the Surgeon.

“ Yes, Sir : I don’t like to be thought old ; and having so excellent a partner, I was willing to try what I could do ; but I was soon obliged to sit down.”

“ Those two elegant girls,” said his Grace, (alluding to Ernestine and Clemence) seem to enter into the spirit of the diversion with a vivacity truly becoming their age, and I have seldom seen two better dancers.”

“ They are this gentleman’s daughters,” said the Surgeon ; “ and do infinite honour both to him and their governess, who was my partner.”

De Melac, though highly flattered, only bowed in silence.

“Do let us walk out,” said the Duke; “we cannot see the sports to advantage here;—and I think, if either of the young ladies are disengaged, I shall solicit the hand of one of them, with your permission, Sir, (turning to De Melac) for the next dance.”

“They are now dancing with my nephews,” said the Surgeon; “and I am sure they will either of them be proud of resigning their partners to your Grace.”

This proposal did not exactly meet with Mr. de Melac’s approbation; still, he could not with propriety start any objections: he therefore followed him out, and remained with the rest of the party among the spectators till the dance was concluded.

At the Duke’s request, he then introduced him to Ernestine, and the young Cadet to Clemence. The Major, who was much
about

about Madame de Franval's age, solicited the favour of her hand, which was immediately granted; and De Melac, encouraged by such an example, joined the set with Mademoiselle de Vanval.

This grand party put a stop to all the other dancing, as every one was eager to see the great men shew off. Bazile alone was very much displeased, from being in a manner excluded from a party he thought himself almost entitled to have joined. How absurd of his father to think of hopping about, because old Vanval had made a fool of himself! Why did not he desire *him* to make the fourth gentleman in this distinguished set: it would certainly have been better than exposing himself. These were his reflections, while he secretly admired the elegance and precision of the Colonel's movements;—while his father felt really flattered, when he saw with what distinguished, nay, even delicate, politeness he treated Ernestine.

When

When the dance was over, the Duke, according to the established custom, resigned his fair partner, and led out the Bailli's daughter,—who was very short—far from handsome—and dressed in the true peasant style. The Duke had found out who she was, and would not take a denial,—though she was frightened out of her wits, and wished very much to be excused: however, having sense enough to discover it was meant as a compliment to her father, and that he had no inclination to laugh at her, she did her best, and was highly pleased with her gay, good-humoured partner.

Bazile was almost petrified when he saw whom his Grace led out the second time; but presumed he only meant to walk the figure with such a partner: he was therefore still more astonished to see him exert himself even more than with Ernestine, and absolutely took pains to encourage such a creature, which, in his opinion, was very much beneath a man of his consequence;
and

and he thought with how much more spirit he would have acted, had he been Duke de Civrac. Dancing with *his* sister was one thing; but to honour a poor Bailli's daughter with his hand was low to a degree. He began now to suppose he meant to run the gauntlet through all the peasants; but the next time the Duke presented his hand to the lively little Clemence. She thought nothing of his superior rank,—was only pleased so excellent a dancer had fallen to her share, and was all life and gaiety. But, unfortunately, a shower came on unexpectedly, which broke up the diversion; and the company began to make for the nearest houses—particularly the Bailli's, who would have kept them all in the rain, if the Duke had not said (turning to the Major) “Let us mount our horses, and make the best of our way to Dunkirk, else we shall prevent many of these good people from getting shelter.”

The rain seemed as if it would be heavy; and Mr. de Melac entreated the Duke and
his

his friends would step into Madame des Ormes's cottage, (shewing him the neat dwelling she inhabited) and assured them she had no company. The Duke thanked him, and accompanied him thither.

The good lady had gone home as soon as Mr. de Melac went to the Bailli's, and had not seen what went forward afterwards; but Bazile hurried on to tell her who was coming; and the old lady was rising from her large arm chair when the Duke entered, and would fain have had him take possession of it; but he insisted upon her resuming her seat with an earnestness which admitted of no denial, and convinced Mr. de Melac he paid the utmost respect to old age.

The grooms were ordered to take the horses home, and to send the carriage as speedily as possible. Mr. de Melac's was already arrived.

The conversation became very general during this interval; but the Duke began
to

to think the time long, as it grew dusk ; and he was fearful the shutting of the gates would be retarded upon his account, when one of his groom^s returned in a small cabriolet belonging to the Major, as his Grace's coachman was not to be found.

Mr. de Melac begged the gentlemen would make use of his carriage—his son and himself would sleep in the country ; but as they did not chuse to derange them, it was at last settled the Major should make the sixth in the coach, and the Duke and his young *protégée* set off in the cabriolet.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

AS soon as the coach had moved on, Mr. de Melac and his party had each something to say in praise of the Duke, and all wished very much to hear the Major's opinion of him.

“The greatest encomiums must fall very short of doing my noble commander justice, Sir,” said he, addressing his discourse to Mr. de Melac; “he has not his equal in the service. Where do you see such a regiment?—all chosen men, and men of real moral principles. I don't think there is either an absolute, bad, or a drunken one among them. At first the Colonel was thought
very

very severe ; but he is now almost adored by his soldiers, and generally beloved and esteemed by all those who have the least claim to his friendship : his failings are merely those of human nature,—while his virtues for so young a man are truly god-like : he spends infinitely more time than he is obliged to do with his regiment, because he knows many of his under officers are sufferers by his absence ; and, for figure and temper, I think he stands unrivalled. He has given unequivocal marks of his courage,—though he never was heard to boast of having been engaged in an affair of honour ; but he would at any time risk his life to save another person's. Such, Sir, is the universal character of the nobleman you have just parted from."

"How truly amiable!" said Mr. de Melac, glancing his eyes towards Bazile, who perfectly understood what he meant. "I presume he was not brought up in the capital—he seems so totally free from—"

Mr.

Mr. de Melac paused, from not finding a proper word to express his meaning.

The Major smiled, and concluded his phrase. "From the present fashionable vices, I presume, you mean, Sir. Yet he was brought up in the centre of luxury and dissipation; but under the eyes of his mother, one of the most amiable women in the world. His father died before he was born; a most worthy man, assisted the Dukes in this arduous undertaking, and, under their joint inspection, he received lessons from all the first masters Paris afforded.

Mr. de Melac wished to have asked several more questions, but their arrival at Dunkirk prevented him from giving way to his curiosity.—They soon reached the house where the Colonel lodged, and there the Major wished to be set down.

The Duke was just arrived; and, upon seeing the carriage stop, came out to receive
his

his friend, and wish Mr. de Melac and his family a good evening. As soon as the coach drove from the door, "What think you of our new acquaintance?" said he, turning to the Major.

"I like de Melac excessively; and his daughters seem amiable, unaffected girls. As for his son, he mixed so little in the conversation, I should be puzzled to give my opinion of him; but I rather think he will never make a fortune by his talents;—and his dress was so studied, and so exactly in the reigning fashion, and he seemed to pay so much attention to it, I am convinced he is an egregious coxcomb.

"In these provincial towns," said the Duke, "a silly sort of emulation, in point of appearance, is very prevalent among men of his age and station: he may possess many amiable qualities, and still allow himself to be drawn in to imitate his companions in that respect. But did you really think, when the old surgeon said he discovered the
great

great likeness which seemed to have struck him so much, there was any resemblance between me and De Melac?"

"Upon my honour, I spoke as I thought," said the Major. "There certainly does exist a strong likeness between you, (making proper allowances for the difference of your ages) and you are much of a height, and certainly equally resemble each other in point of figure;—and there positively is a sort of dignity in Mr. de Melac's manners I little expected to have seen in those of a provincial Receiver-General."

"I made the same remark," said the Duke;—indeed I like him much; he seems to possess an excellent understanding, and infinite knowledge of the world. I presume he was in an extensive line of business in the West-Indies: I assure you I shall be happy to cultivate his acquaintance."

The Major made various remarks upon the *fête* and Flemish customs, which served them

them for conversation till they separated for the night.

Mr. de Melac, on their return, made some very judicious comments upon the praises the Major had bestowed upon the Duke, and told Bazile he hoped he would never be more out in his judgment.

His Grace did not stand quite so high in Bazile's opinion as he had done in the morning, and he had listened with a sentiment bordering upon envy to the Major's account of him. He therefore now said he thought he was rather too familiar with his inferiors.

“Why he did not take much notice of you,” said Mr. de Melac. “In his place you would, no doubt, have acted with infinitely more propriety : however, if I have the pleasure of ever hearing one half as much said in your praise, I shall be perfectly satisfied with your conduct ; and if his Grace ever deign to notice me again, I shall be
very

very much flattered, and feel myself highly honoured by his condescension."

In the course of a week, the Duke de Civrac had received the compliments of all the nobles in and round Dunkirk, but saw no one among them he liked so well as Mr. de Melac, notwithstanding the difference in their ages; but the Receiver-General was not like many others, whom he had treated with equal politeness. They had always forced themselves into his company,—while De Melac almost seemed to avoid him. The fact was, he by no means (much as he liked him) wished to give him any pretence for calling at his house, as he was certainly in every respect a very improper companion for his children; for was he to treat his son with the slightest degree of familiarity, it would certainly turn his head; and he still less wished him to notice his daughters. Yet they often met of an evening, as the Duke always took a ride if the weather was fine, and in general went the road which
led

led through the village Madame des Ormes inhabited;—it branched off, into various directions, a little further, and was much pleasanter than the sea coast; and, as he always stopped to address Mr. de Melac, and mostly entered into conversation with him, an imperceptible familiarity soon lessened the distance which rank had placed between him and the Receiver-General in less than a fortnight. His Grace never passed Madame des Ormes's door without calling to ask how she did, if he neither met nor overtook De Melac; in short, it became a sort of rendezvous for each, and the young ladies paid their visits to their grandmother of a morning.—As the Duke therefore never met them, he easily guessed their father wished to keep them out of his way, and perfectly forgave the suspicions such conduct seemed to imply; indeed he looked upon it as a very strong proof of Mr. de Melac's prudence and good sense. He most probably thought he bore some resemblance to most young men of rank and fashion of

his own age; and as he could not suppose he would ever marry either of his daughters, did not wish to put it in his power to attempt to gain their affections with less honourable views.

This behaviour therefore increased instead of lessening his esteem for this excellent father; their interviews grew longer every day; and sometimes Mr. de Melac accompanied his Grace home to supper. Trade, politics, and the state of the French finances were their general topicks; and his Grace soon found he could not start any subject in which Mr. de Melac was not more conversant than himself.

One evening when they were *tête-à-tête*, and seated in Madame des Ormes's garden, the Duke talking of his profession, the discourse insensibly turned upon fortification and military tacticks. De Melac asked if he thought Dunkirk could be easily taken.

“Not

"Not if it was properly defended," he replied—pointing out the various methods he should adopt, were he ever called upon to put his skill to the proof.

They debated the subject with infinite good humour on both sides, though their opinions did not exactly coincide; and the Duke found Mr. de Melac understood the art of war full as well as he did; which induced him to ask if he had ever been in the service, as he seemed perfectly acquainted with all the technical military terms, which, to be thoroughly master of the different sciences, an officer ought to study.

The question, though put in such flattering terms, evidently embarrassed De Melac; for his colour heightened, while he said, "For a short time, in the early part of my life."

The Duke was hurt to find he had unintentionally revived some very disagreeable reflections

reflections in his new friend's mind, and was convinced some strange circumstance must have induced a man, so much *au fait* in the duties of his profession, to quit the service,—for he seemed to have very high notions of honour; but it was a subject he could not discuss. He therefore gave a different turn to the conversation; and they soon parted.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

P. DURING supper, Mr. de Melac generally mentioned what had passed between him and the Duke, if he had seen him in the course of the evening,—which recitals were meant as a stimulus for Bazile, who was exceedingly anxious to be upon equal terms of familiarity with him,—though from very different reasons. He therefore asked his father why he never invited the Duke home.

Because I don't wish him to suppose I look upon you as a fit companion for him. When I think you worthy the honour, believe me I shall not object to introducing

you to any *good* man of *any* rank. At present, you are a youth compared to the Duke, and a mere boy in point of real knowledge : you have much to learn before your company will be coveted by men of sense of any age. Try to follow the excellent example this young nobleman affords you, and let me have the satisfaction to find you equally esteemed and respected at his age ; for respect is as much the tribute of merit as of rank."

These lectures by no means pleased Bazile ; and each succeeding day increased his disgust for the line of life he found himself in a manner forced to adopt. Berenger was his sole confidant, and to him he expressed astonishment at the frequent interviews between his father and the Duke, which seemed only spent in moralizing ; and asked Berenger if he was Duke de Civrac, and Colonel Commandant of one of the finest regiments in the kingdom, whether he would spend his evenings as he did,—riding up and down
dusty

dusty lanes, or *prosing* with an old man about the duties of his profession.

Berenger remarked, the Duke most probably did it to kill time, and the play-house could not answer that end so effectually; accustomed as he was to the Paris theatres, their strolling actors could only serve him to laugh at; and no doubt he always supped and concluded his evenings at the houses of the different nobility in the town. He had often seen his carriage very late at the Commandant's, and at various other hotels. "Do you suppose he is like your father?—retires, because the **cloche bourgeoise* rings at ten o'clock. I think if you had your father's fortune, you would put your house upon rather a more respectable footing."

"A bell rings in all garrison towns at that hour, and is looked upon as a sort of order for the lower class of citizens to retire; and after that, every one is obliged to carry a light."

"At present it resembles a convent," said Bazile. "I wish to God both my sisters were married, and then our doors would not be shut against all my acquaintance—at least those my father has not selected for my companions."

"Talking of marriage," said Berenger, "do you know it has struck me the Duke may be in love with your eldest sister: she is a devilish fine girl; and who knows but these private interviews may be partly in making arrangements for the wedding.—Your father is very rich, and he would certainly come down handsomely upon the occasion; and many a nobleman has married into a Farmer General's family;—surely yours is as respectable as theirs, or the deuce is in it."

"You have certainly guessed right, Berenger," said Bazile. "The Duke danced with Ernestine at the *ducaffe*; and, though she is my sister, I must allow she is very handsome. The Duke, by my father's account of him, has a fine number of antedeluvian

deluvian notions ; and he means, no doubt, to marry for love ;—and if he is fond of moralizing, he could not have met with his match better than in my dad ; who, between you and me, would have made an excellent Monk ; and my gandmother (it ought to be observed he had mentioned this lady before to his friend) would make as good a Lady Abbess. Between them both, I dare say, they extol Ernestine to the skies, and the Duke makes love by proxy ; for Ernestine visits the old lady every morning, to hear, I suppose, all the fine things he has said of her over night ; and my father keeps them apart to bring matters to a conclusion, I will be bound, and to prevent accidents—you take me, Berenger.”

The friend laughed at Bazile’s wit ; and protested, if he was in his place, and wished, like him, to enter the army, he would strike while the iron was hot, and ask the Duke at once to receive him into his regiment. “ Depend upon it he will be ready enough

just now to do any thing to serve any part of the family ; and your father will not dare object to any proposal that he may make at the present juncture."

"Very true, my dear friend," said the flighty Bazile, who already saw himself a Cornet in the regiment. "The only difficulty will be, how to obtain a private audience of his Grace."

"Write him a polite note," said this disinterested friend, "and beg leave to see him upon business of importance ; convince him you think yourself upon a footing with him, and he will treat you accordingly ; besides, it will make him suppose you are in the secret."

"But, if it should come to my father's ears," said Bazile.

"There is not the slightest chance of that," said his friend, "because you can entreat the Duke not to mention it ; and I think you may depend upon my discretion."

Bazile

Bazile assured him he would trust his life in his hands.

The next day they agreed to meet again to write this important letter, and settle the time which would be most proper to deliver it; and, in the mean while, Bazile determined to sift the secret out of Clemence, who was still in some respects his confident. For this purpose he drew her apart in the morning, mentioned his suspicions as amounting to facts, and asked her if she had not heard the matter mentioned by their father or grandmother.

Clemence, though five years younger than Bazile, possessed more judgment: she was therefore perfectly convinced no such matter was in agitation;—yet would not let so favourable an opportunity escape her to exercise her satirical talents upon her credulous brother. She affected to believe what he said, but assured him she was not in the secret,—yet acknowledged she thought something

something was going forward; and produced such ridiculous circumstances in support of her assertion, that any one, except Bazile, must have seen she was laughing at him. She then congratulated him upon his brilliant prospects; adding, "How pompous it will sound, Bazile, when you and I can talk of our sister the Duchesse, and our brother the Duke: his Grace will certainly purchase you a place at court. Now I reflect, he certainly mentioned something of the kind to my grandmother; that is, that the post of Screen to the Private Apartments was vacant;—who knows but he was thinking of you at the time?"

"Screen to the Private Apartments, child! you must have made a mistake."

"Not at all. Some great man always stands or lies, I hardly know which, between the King and the fire, to screen his Majesty's legs from being scorched;—or, perhaps, he kneels. Think what a noble employment and brilliant title—*Mr. L'Ecran des Petits Appartemens*. How superior to

Mr. Bazile Melac, *Premier Commis du Receveur-General de Dunquerque.**

“Don’t talk nonsense, Clemence; I should prefer going into the army to any post at court.”

“Oh! I dare say his Grace will provide for you in any line: only, as you are rather *frilleux*†, I thought the post I mentioned would exactly suit you.”

A summons to breakfast broke off the conversation; and Bazile already saw himself in command of this shewy regiment, and had no doubt of attaining the *Bâton de Marechal* before he was his father’s age.

In the afternoon, he met Berenger at the appointed time, and told him all that had passed between him and Clemence.

* First Clerk to the Receiver-General of Dunkirk.

† Chilly.

Berenger

Berenger had never heard of the post she mentioned, but did not doubt it was a very honourable one : however, still advised him to apply to the Duke ; because, if he once got admitted into his regiment, he would be secure, even should any thing happen to break off the match ;--and his task was become infinitely more easy now ; for, from what Clemence had said, there was little doubt but the Duke had it in actual contemplation to provide for him handsomely, and place him in a rank suitable to his brother-in-law.

They adjourned to a house they often frequented to compose the epistle in question ; which was, by Berenger's advice, very short—only, as they had previously agreed, to request an interview during the course of the following day.

Berenger said he would deliver it to the Duke's servant late in the evening, and leave word he would call early in the morning for
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an answer; but Bazile over-ruled this proposal, and said he had better carry it between nine and ten in the morning, and wait for the answer; for his father had often supped with the Duke of late, and he would not have him know of this application for the world.

Bazile promised to slip out of the office about nine o'clock, and wait his return in a neighbouring street; and seriously assured Berenger he would take upon himself to provide for him as soon as he was settled.

At the appointed time Bazile slipped out—met his friend, and proceeded with him within sight of the Duke's lodgings: he then struck into an adjoining street, where Berenger was to come to him as soon as he had got the answer.—This interval appeared an age to Bazile. He paced the street with hasty steps for near a quarter of an hour; when, to his inexpressible joy, he saw Berenger hastening towards him with a letter in
3 his

his hand. Bazile instantly seized it, tore it open, and read as follows :—

“ *My dear Sir,*

“ I am at home, alone, perfectly at leisure,
 “ and shall be very happy to see you imme-
 “ diately ; or if any other time of the day
 “ after twelve o’clock should suit you bet-
 “ ter, pray let me know, as I have no en-
 “ gagements that will interfere with my wish
 “ to see you at your own hour.

“ DE CIVRAC.”

“ There !” said Berenger—“ I think you have nothing to fear now : this is a pretty good proof of what is going forward.”

The fact was, the Duke thought the letter came from the father instead of the son, as it was signed De Melac ; and presumed, when he inquired of his valet who brought it, that Berenger was one of his clerks—Bazile little guessing so natural a

quiproquo

quiproquo had induced the Duke to address him so politely.

Bazile, highly delighted, hastened home : he ought to have been in the office sooner, but, fortunately, he had not been inquired for, as his father, when he had any particular business, wrote in his private study : he therefore hastened to dress, told the clerks what to say if he was asked for, and hastened to obey this agreeable summons.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

HE soon reached the Duke's lodgings, and, upon giving his name, was immediately shewn into his dressing-room.

The Duke was at breakfast, anxiously expecting his new friend, whom he was convinced, from the general tenor of his character, must have had some very powerful motives to induce him to make the request the note he had just received contained. He was therefore very much surprised when Bazile made his appearance. As his expressive countenance was the index of his feelings, Bazile instantly discovered he was an unexpected guest;—though it never struck him the Duke might not have known his hand-writing, nor that his father's Christian

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tian name began with an A instead of a B. The Duke, who had rose upon his entrance, now desired him to take a chair, while he resumed his own seat; but did not inquire (as he certainly would have done, had it been his father) whether he had breakfasted, nor asked him to partake of his meal, but seemed to wait in silence an explanation of the motives which had made an almost total stranger request a private interview; at last, finding his visiter did not speak, he said, "I hope Mr. de Melac is well, Sir?"

This question required some answer; and Bazile, in the greatest confusion, and with no small degree of hesitation, stammered out, "Very well; I am much obliged to your Grace." He had never yet been *tête-à-tête* with so great a man; and all his self-consequence forsook him in his presence; all the fine things he meant to have said escaped his memory, and he found himself very unequal to the task which had appeared so easy to him but a short time before;

before ; and, to have thus intruded himself into such a man's presence, without some ostensible reason for the liberty, might be construed into an insult : he therefore made an attempt to speak, but the words that presented themselves were not those he intended to use.

The Duke, who plainly saw, and really pitied his embarrassment, began to think he had got into some scrape, and wanted either his assistance or advice to extricate himself, he therefore gave him full time to recollect himself, by pouring out slowly, and drinking a dish of chocolate ; but finding him still silent, at length said, " I hope nothing has happened to disturb you, Mr. Bazile ? you come from your father, I presume : our acquaintance is certainly not of long standing, yet there are few men for whom I have so great an esteem ; therefore pray speak out—believe me I shall be very happy if I can be of any use to him."

Rather

Rather encouraged by this speech, Bazile ventured to say, while his eyes were fixed on the floor, "I have taken the liberty to wait upon your Grace upon my own account. I have long had a wish, though I believe my father don't absolutely approve of the notion——"

Bazile paused; but as he received no answer, (indeed the Duke would have been at a loss what to say) thus went on.

"But a word from your Grace, I know, would have great weight;—in short, I have a very great desire to serve my king and country: I have studied fortification under my father, and a very good master of that science in Guadaloupe; and I am not fond of a counting-house. I have no doubt but my father would consent to my wishes, if your Grace would do me the favour to interest yourself in my behalf, and would deign to receive me into your own regiment.

Having

Having thus disclosed his mighty secret, he stopped, and waited his doom in fearful silence, without once daring to raise his eyes.

The Duke thought it very possible he might not like a counting-house, yet thought it rather extraordinary he should apply to him to effect a change in his situation: however, far from being offended, he said, in the mildest accent, "My regard for your father, Mr. Bazile, makes me really wish to serve you, and, could I do it with propriety, in your own way; but your request must have the sanction of his approbation before I can promise to gratify your inclination. You seem to wish me to persuade Mr. de Melac to consent to your desire: you must know my youth, and consequent inexperience, totally precludes me from advising a man of his years and superior understanding in such a case. No father can be more interested in the welfare of a son,

son, I am convinced ; and he would justly deem me very meddling and impertinent was I to take upon myself to interfere in his family affairs. At present there is no vacancy in my regiment—but that would not prevent me from putting you *en suite* ; but, as I told you before, it must be with the full approbation of your father. Mention your wishes to him again ; and, after you have alledged all the arguments you can adduce to bring him into your way of thinking, listen to what he has to say on his side of the question, with the attention his age, experience, and, more especially, the love he bears you entitles him to : you have not the same reasons to alledge in support of your cause many young men can give, nor is the duty required so easy as some people imagine. However, thus far I will engage to interfere in the matter ; if you are averse to starting the subject, (which I rather suppose has been often debated between your father and yourself) in a *tête-à-tête*, if you
will

will walk with him towards Madame des Ormes this evening, where I have frequently met him, I shall take that road, and will join him as usual. This will afford you an opportunity of preferring your request to me before him; and, if I don't find him very averse to your wishes, you may depend upon my strenuous support. Should Mr. de Melac not find himself inclined to walk this evening, let it be to-morrow, or the next day; for I am really as anxious as you no doubt are, to hear what he has to say upon the subject: men of our age must reap some benefit from the arguments of a man of your father's sense and experience, even though they militate against our desires."

His Grace now took out his watch, saying, "I beg your pardon, Sir, but I must dress for the parade; therefore, with your leave, we will postpone any further discussion of this subject till we meet again."

Bazile

Bazile was by no means satisfied, but knew it was in vain to start any objections; therefore, in almost as much confusion as when he entered, made his parting bow, and retired.

At the corner of the first street stood Berenger, who called out the moment he caught sight of Bazile, "Well, what luck, my dear friend? am I to wish you joy?"

Bazile's dejected countenance instantly damped all his sanguine hopes; but when he had related, nearly word for word, what had passed between him and the Duke, he said, "Why look so dull and disappointed, then, my dear friend? what more did you expect? has not his Grace promised to put you in the *suite* of his regiment? for, can you suppose your father will hesitate about placing you under the care of such a man? He will provide for you without his being at a shilling expence. No, no, Mr. de Melac knows his own interest better than all that

comes to. I would give a hundred Louis this moment for your chance, if I had them; besides, as your brother-in-law, the Duke, will never rest satisfied till he has placed you at the head of a regiment. He did not mention his approaching marriage?"

"Not a word about it; only said there was not a man in the world he had a higher esteem for than my father, nor a greater wish to serve."

"He could not have spoke plainer," said Berenger. "Run home directly, my dear Bazile—get in unobserved, if possible—change your dress, and set down to your desk—for it will be most prudent to keep the old man in a good humour at present. Offer very politely to accompany him this evening, to pay your respects to your dear grandmother;—let me see you when you return, and I shall expect you at the old place at nine—so adieu. I must run, or my buck of a master and myself shan't set our horses together."

Bazile's

Bazile's hopes were rather revived by Berenger's explanation of what had passed in his conference with the Duke. He got home, and into his own room, unperceived—changed his dress, and took his usual place in the office—heard he had not been inquired for, so found all was safe; and when his father came in, he was writing among the clerks.

The day was therefore spent in perfect harmony; and, in the evening, Bazile asked his father which way he meant to walk?

Mr. de Melac was rather surprized at the question; and begged to know what had induced him to make the inquiry?

He had not seen his grandmother lately, he said, therefore would accompany him thither, with his leave, if he was going that evening.

F 2

Mr.

Bazile

Mr. de Melac was pleased at the proposal, and said he should be glad of his company—little guessing the secret spring of Bazile's movements.

CHAP. VIII.

THE evening was warm, therefore they walked gently along under the trees which bordered the road, and were within sight of the village when the Duke, whom Bazile expected with impatience, came riding after them. Bazile caught sight of him first, but took no notice, till his father made the same discovery.

His Grace alighted as soon as he rode up, and had asked Mr. de Melac and his son how they did.

Bazile

Bazile thought every second an age while the Duke and his father mentioned the news of the day, and commented upon the weather. Eager to be relieved from his present state of suspense, he seized the first break in their discourse to say, "I don't think there is a regimental in all France so becoming as your Grace's. Pray have you been long in the service?"

Mr de Melac gave him a look, thoroughly expressive of his disapprobation of this abrupt and impertinent question; but the Duke was too well acquainted with its cause to feel himself at all offended. Mr. de Melac had never made a similar inquiry during the familiar conversations he had held with him, nor had his Grace happened to mention it himself; however, willing to oblige Bazile, and lead to the subject he seemed so anxious about, smiled and said, "I have been a Colonel these five years, Mr. Bazile, but I entered the service at fourteen, and begun my military career in the *Gens*

d'armes, under the command of my grandfather the Marechal de St. Frimin, allowed to be a very——”

At that moment the Duke felt himself seized by the arm by Mr. de Melac, who fixed his eyes steadfastly upon his face for about three seconds; during which time his colour all forsook his cheeks, and he seemed breathless, and unable to articulate a word, and must have fallen upon the ground, if the Duke (excessively alarmed, and who really thought him dying) had not caught him in his arms,—expecting every moment to see him a breathless corse; but, though still unable to speak, Mr. de Melac was conscious of the liberty he had taken, and made an effort to disengage himself from the Duke's encircling arms, and to take hold of his son; but he would support him, as being infinitely more able, he said,—while he inquired very anxiously how he felt himself; and finding he did not recover, entreated him to sit down upon a bank by the
road

road side; then calling to his servant, who was slowly following with the horses, desired him to ride with all speed to the nearest house for a glass of water. His Grace then seated himself by Mr. de Melac's side, and made him lean his head against him.

Bazile was, during all this time, a mere spectator, and never spoke, or even offered to assist either in supporting or recovering his father: his fright, and the severe disappointment he had experienced at such a moment, had bereft him of all presence of mind,—till the Duke, in an impatient tone, desired him to loose his father's neckcloth and shirt collar.

As they were very near the entrance of the village, the servant soon returned with the water; but Mr. de Melac had begun to recover before he arrived: he drank part of it, and then assured the Duke he was much better."

Heaven be praised!" said his Grace; "you don't know how you frightened me; but do sit still—you are not sufficiently recovered to think of moving.

Bazile had now found his speech, and asked his father how he found himself, and what had occasioned his illness?

"Pray postpone any further questions, Mr. Bazile," said his Grace, "till your father is better able to answer them. In a few minutes we will lead him gently on towards the village."

In about ten minutes De Melac was sufficiently recovered to be able to express his gratitude for the evident interest the Duke took in his health, and assured him he was perfectly able to walk—endeavouring to rise while he spoke.

The Duke and his son assisted him; and taking an arm of each, they proceeded
slowly

slowly along.—As he was now perfectly able to talk, the Duke asked him if he had ever been taken so before?

“Never,” said De Melac, with a faltering voice—the natural result of his recent fit; but conscious he was still very much agitated, he said he had rather not go to Madame des Ormes immediately—his countenance would inform her something had been the matter with him, at which he knew she would be very much alarmed; he should therefore prefer going to the Bailliff’s till he was quite recovered—entreating he might no longer intrude upon his goodness, since his son was with him.

“I must see you safe housed, my good friend,” said the Duke; I will then take a ride a few miles further, and call to see how you do upon my return. I really think you ought to be blooded;—but you must be the best judge of your own feelings.

Their arrival at the Bailliff's prevented Mr. de Melac from making any answer. This honest Flemish and his wife were very much shocked when they learned what had once more procured them the honour of their visit. The Duke had often been uppermost in their thoughts, and often the subject of their discourse since the fête; they highly recommended Mr. de Melac's precaution, and offered a vast many remedies for such complaints. He drank a large tumbler of wine, and then entreated they would permit him to lie down upon one of their beds for half an hour; assuring them his illness arose from having eat something at dinner which had disagreed with him, or from the heat of the weather.

This they all readily believed; and the Duke having expressed his hopes that he should find him much better when he returned, mounted his horse, and rode off.

Bazile

Bazile accompanied his father into the Bailliffs' best apartment ; but as soon as he was laid down, Mr. de Melac said, as he should try to take a little nap, he had rather be left alone ; and Bazile, not sorry to be thus dismissed, hastened into the garden, and began to reflect upon what would have been the consequence, had his father been carried off in this strange fit ;—but these attacks might become frequent. He wondered whether they were paralytic or apoplectic, and which was the most speedy forerunner of approaching dissolution : the latter, he concluded, as his grandmother's head shook with the palsy, and she was yet in very good health ; yet he persuaded himself he loved his father ; still, if it did please God to take him, why he should the sooner become his own master, and no longer be obliged to ask his permission to embrace a military life. What a fine thing, at his age, to be addressed *Mon Colonel*, as the Duke had been ; but to add the title of *Monseigneur* to such an advantage, in his opinion,

opinion, was the *ne plus ultra* of human felicity ; and to be able to say, as the Duke had done, almost at the moment his father was taken ill, “ My grandfather, the Marechal de St. Firmin—what a noble found ! ”— Oh ! how he longed to distinguish himself by his bravery and skill ! brandishing a cane he had in his hand, then carrying it in state as he had seen the Duke do his broad sword, when he marched at the head of his men ; however, he hoped very soon to be able to claim some relationship to him ; and grew half a foot higher, in his own imagination, upon the strength of so glorious an idea.

In the midst of his exultation, he looked over the garden wall in a sort of triumph, when he caught sight of La Mere des Ormes—her head shaking more than usual, hurrying towards the house : he shrunk back in an instant ;—all the airy structure he had been building fell to the ground : he gnashed his teeth, struck his cane violently upon the

ground, blamed his father more than ever for having brought this filly, mean old woman from Rouen; and he had not vented his spleen, before this much-despised, though truly respectable grandmother came tottering towards him.

Some officious person had told her they had seen Mr. de Melac enter the Bailliff's house, supported by two gentlemen; and the shock the intelligence gave her (for had he been her own son she could not have been more attached to Mr. de Melac) prevented her from setting out sooner to make her anxious inquiries.

The Bailliff and his wife made her drink a glass of wine, which rather revived her drooping spirits, by repeating what Mr. de Melac had said respecting his illness; advising her not to disturb him, as a little rest would most likely effect his cure.

She

She was of their opinion, so walked into the garden to learn the particulars of her son's disorder.

Bazile was forced to approach her, and thought nothing was so tiresome as the garrulous questions of old age, nor no one so fond of prating as his grandmother. With difficulty he concealed his impatience, and assured her his father would be quite well when he got up;—the heat had overcome him, and what was there to alarm her or anybody else in a disorder that arose from so natural and so simple a cause? While he was thus *feelingly* expatiating upon his father's illness, Mr. de Melac joined them. He was still very pale, and unusually dejected; but, in answer to the kind old woman's inquiries, assured her he was very well,—though, by way of completing his cure, intended to sleep at her house, as a little fresh country air would be of more service to him than any medicines he could take; desired.

desired Bazile to return home, and let Madame de Franval and his sisters know his intentions, without mentioning his illness, as his countenance would have lost all traces of it by the morning.

Bazile did not much relish this commission; as his father was so well recovered, he was in hopes he should have found an opportunity, when the Duke returned, to turn the discourse upon the army, and his wish to enter the service. He knew there was no appeal from his father's orders, as they were always the result of reason, and found it utterly impossible to start any objections to this plan; he therefore set out upon his return.

His father had frequently slept at his grandmother's, but he had never been informed of it, till the family assembled at supper. This evening was his own.

As

As soon as he had given in his report to his sisters, and made some excuses for not supping with the family, he thought he would spend the evening with his friend Berenger, impart his recent disappointment, and take his advice how to repair this lost opportunity.

CHAP.

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CHAP. IX.

THE Duke returned in about an hour, alighted at the Bailliff's door, and went in to make his enquiries. Mr. de Melac was just going over to Madame des Ormes, and assured him, that he was infinitely better; then mentioned his intention of keeping the country that night.

"You are quite right, my dear sir," said the Duke; "but if you are not perfectly recovered in the morning, I must intreat you will send for the surgeon of my regiment, who is really a very clever man, and in whose hands I would freely trust my life."

Mr.

Mr. de Melac tried once more to express his gratitude; the Duke would not suffer him to proceed in that strain; but when he took his hand to wish him a good night, he felt it tremble within his: their eyes met, and Mr. de Melac's countenance again betrayed symptoms of his recent disorder. The Duke therefore apprehended him to be worse than he really was; and after expressing a thousand kind wishes for the re-establishment of his health, he took his leave, and proceeded to Dunkirk.

Having made his enquiries concerning Bazile, whom he had no wish to see but in his father's presence, he took a contrary road, that he might not be way laid. His Grace was engaged to sup with the Officers of his own and the other regiments, which composed the garrison, at the Hotel de Flanders; but when he reached his lodgings, he thought it possible Mr. de Melac might be worse in the night, and felt himself so much interested in his recovery, that he determined

mined to send him some advice before the gates were shut ; and upon reflection, though he had a very high opinion of his own surgeon, thought Mr. de Melac might place greater faith in the skill of Mr. Vanval ; besides, they were old acquaintance ; and this worthy man (for such was the character Mr. de Melac always gave him) might be hurt if his friend employed any body else. He therefore went in search of him—he was not at home ; and his sister, who answered the door, said he had just been sent for to a labour, where he would, most probably, be detained all night. As she did not know the Duke, he left no message, but determined to send his own surgeon, and write Mr. de Melac his reasons for so doing : he was also from home. However at the last mentioned gentleman's he set down, and wrote a short note to the Receiver General, in which he enclosed one to the surgeon, containing his instructions, and then proceeded to the Hotel de Flanders.

The party he went to meet were all assembled, and told his Grace when he went in
they

they began to think him late; the Duke said he had been out of town, and had two or three places to call at since his return, and hoped he had not kept supper waiting. "Not a moment," said one of the gentlemen; "as it is not yet ready, we have sat down to *Vingt-un* to pass away the time." The Duke instantly joined in play; but their mirth was interrupted by frequent bursts, nay, shouts of laughter, which issued from an adjoining room. Some of the company wished to have silenced this riotous party; but the Duke interfered in their behalf, and insisted they might be permitted to amuse themselves their own way. "It would be very hard," he said, "to deny any one a privilege they certainly had an equal right to enjoy." At last supper was brought in; the Duke asked the waiter who those riotous gentlemen were in the next room.

"The Receiver General's son is giving a treat to his friends," was the answer.

"What, young Melac?" said the Duke, unwilling to believe the waiter.

"The same, your Grace," said the man.

The

The Duke's surprise was now visible.

“Why, I saw that young fellow not more than three hours ago, two miles distant in the country.—“There are five besides himself,” said the waiter; “they came in together about an hour and a half ago, and were in such a hurry for their supper, they have put our cook into so great a bustle, he will not be in a good humour again for a week.”

Most of the gentlemen present laughed at the manner in which this was said; but the Duke felt very much hurt to think the son of so excellent a man should chuse such a moment to regale his friends.

Bazile had already lowered himself very much in his esteem; but he was now convinced he must be totally devoid of filial affection, of course unworthy his notice. They had just finished supper in the next room, when the Officers sat down to their's; and as their noise increased every minute, they of course

course became the subject of these gentlemen's conversation. One of them remarked some of the party spoke very bad French:

"There are three Englishmen among them," said the waiter; "one of them is the Confessor to the English ladies."

"What, the Confessor of the English convent?" said one of the Officers. "I met that fellow a few nights ago so drunk, I had a great mind to have sent him to the guard-house; for it was ten o'clock, and he was without a light."

The waiter said he was a merry soul, and loved the bottle dearly; he had frequently led him home; for he generally used their house, because it was handy.

"I am glad the fellow has decency enough to try to conceal his failings," said the Duke.—An absolute shout of mirth, and "well done, Dominé," re-echoed by the whole party, now assailed their ears.

"What are they doing?" said the Major of Hussars.

"Making

“ Making the priest fuddled, I fancy, fir,”
said the waiter.

“ A very eligible employment,” said the Duke; “ I hope for once they will be disappointed ”

“ He is not a bad hand, your Grace ; he can carry a pretty good quantity ; but they contrive to make him drink two or three glasses to their one, and he is too fond of good liquor, he says, to dispute the point with them.”

The Duke was not in his usual gay spirits; Bazile's evident want of feeling hurt him so much, that he could not join in a laugh at the expence of the follies of mankind : still he never took upon himself the office of senior in any company ; and some of the gentlemen present were old enough to have been his father ; yet he stood so high in all their esteem, his example was sure to be followed ; and by mutual consent, they gave the conversation a different turn. His Grace was not fond of being out late, and it was near
eleven

eleven o'clock before their supper was over; drinking, especially to any degree of excess, is seldom, nay, hardly ever, encouraged among men of rank in France; therefore having assisted in emptying a few bottles of champaign, the Duke rose to take his leave, and his Major followed his example; when the door of their room was opened by an Englishman, who advancing a few steps, said, in his own language, "Pray, gentlemen, is Mr. Bever here?" Finding he was not understood, he repeated his question in French; but having cast his eyes round, and looked particularly at the Duke, who was standing very near him, he begged pardon for his intrusion, and was going to retire, when he received a slap on the shoulder, which fairly drove him forward against the Duke; and a person whose voice he perfectly recognized, said, in broken English, "This way, and be d—d to you." His Grace raised his eyes, and met those of Bazile de Melac, who was now standing in the doorway. He was motionless for a few seconds, though

though infinitely too much in liquor to know or almost care what he either did or said. The Duke, observing his surprise, said, "Is this gentleman a friend of your's, Mr. Bazile?" He could not find in his heart to address him by the name his father had rendered so respectable.

The stranger said in French, he was come for Mr. Beaver.

"Go along, you stupid hound, and give orders for his funeral," said Bazely, seizing the Duke by the arm with the utmost familiarity.

"Do pray come here, *mon Colonel*, and I will treat you with a fight you have not seen this many a day."

"What is it?" said the Duke, without making any resistance.

"A dead man: we have just laid him out; his cassock is as full as it can hold; and we are going to chaunt the *de profundis* over him with all due solemnity."

This speech was frequently interrupted by a drunken hiccup. Staggering towards the room he came out of, and still holding the Duke, who being rather curious to take a survey of this select party, suffered himself to be dragged along in silence: the first thing he stumbled against was an empty bottle, which Bazile made a kick at, and would have fallen at his length, if the Duke had not saved him. The floor was covered with these stumbling blocks; which had been kicked from one to the other, till most of them were broken. The sound of *your Grace*, with the appearance of a man, the whole party knew to be of such rank and consequence, astonished them very much: but how Bazile came to be thus familiar with him; or how he dared to take such liberties, none of them, Berenger excepted, who was of course one of the party, could possibly comprehend. The room was very long, and the Duke permitted his conductor to lead him to the upper end where, extended on a sofa, Bazile expected to behold
the

the priest, and was extremely mortified to perceive he had, by the waiter's assistance, made his escape. The Englishman, who came to protect Mr. Beaver, withdrew, rejoicing he had been saved from the profane rites this Bacchanalian crew were preparing to celebrate; and reproaching them for pouring so much wine down his throat, and warning them that they might one day feel the consequence of such drunken revels. This they were perfectly easy about, and persisted in declaring it would have been excellent sport, could they have buried him but for a few hours. To have attempted to reason with them, the Duke knew would be madness, and therefore merely tried to disengage himself from Bazile's grasp, wishing to make a speedy retreat from such a scene; but the rest of the officers had followed him, and were highly diverted with the drunken chorus.—Those sitting round the table were rather howling than singing. Bazile, observing they were entertained, felt very much flattered, and told them *he* was

master of the ceremonies ; hoped they would do him the honour to drink one glass with him—his friends joined in the intreaty, and the necks of two or three flasks of sparkling champaign were instantly knocked off, and tumblers put into each of the Officers' hands: not to affect singularity, the Duke followed his friends' example, and then made his escape with the Major. The Officers felt very much disposed to serve those of Bazile's party, who were able to stand, as *they* had done the priest; therefore took their seats among them. To have men of their rank in the army to honour him so far, put Bazile into such excellent spirits, that he sent for more wine, and pushed the bottle about as long as he could either see, or speak distinctly. When the Officers found they had accomplished their design, that is, made the company so drunk, they could scarcely either walk or speak, they said they must be going. Bazile promised to call in the morning and pay the bill, and the whole party followed the Officers into the street, declaring they would

would see them safe home : it was now between one and two. The Officers, as soon as they arrived at the *Grande Place*, which was very near the hotel where they stopt, took to their heels ; their new friends were not able to follow them. The former had nothing to fear from the soldiers on duty, though they were without lights.

Officiers is always a sufficient answer to their *qui va là*.

Bazile and his party abused the deserters for leaving them ; and in short staggered about the streets in a manner so disorderly, and made so much noise as to occasion their being soon seized by a party of Hussars, and conveyed to the guard house.

CHAP. X.

ANY sudden alarm or fright is sure to bring a person, let them be ever so much in liquor, in some degree to their senses; and Bazile no sooner found himself in actual confinement, than he began to reflect upon the events of the evening. On his return to Dunkirk, he had gone directly home, and told his sisters his father would not return, but complained of a head-ache, which he made a pretext for retiring early; and by the assistance of the footman he got out privately, and hastened to his rendezvous with Berenger, who had joined the English party, with whom they were both intimate. While waiting for Bazile, he was assisting them to empty a bowl of punch at an obscure convent in a back street, where he and Bazile generally

generally met ; the latter took him apart as soon as he entered, and briefly related the occurrences of the afternoon. Berenger, as usual, saw every thing in the most favourable light, and asked him to join their party. To this Bazile readily agreed, as he wished to spend the evening jovially, he said ; but immediately advised adjourning to some better house, where they should meet with something worth eating and drinking, and he would meet the whole set. So agreeable a proposal was sure to meet with general approbation.

Bazile concluded their evening as has already been related ; and neither he nor his companions relished either their night's lodging, or the thoughts of appearing before the Commandant in the morning. They could not sleep : but as they recovered their reason, they began to communicate their thoughts to each other. Bazile was infinitely more afraid of this pretty freak's coming to his father's ears, than of any punishment

nishment the Commandant might think proper to inflict ; and the least they had to dread was a fortnight's imprisonment. These reflections soon sobered him. What would his father say when he returned home, found he had been out all night, and was then confined for riotous behaviour? he must also discover where he had spent the evening, what his bill amounted to, &c. &c. : he was convinced he would never forgive him, for he was forced to acknowledge he could not have chose a more unlucky or improper moment in which to play the fool.

And now how to extricate himself from this horrid dilemma, Old Vanval had neither the power, nor would have the least inclination, was he to make his case known to him : the Duke de Civrac certainly could set him at liberty, as it was a party of his men had taken them into custody ; but an application to him might overturn all his other fine projects. However, necessity had no law, and he would willingly at that moment

ment have relinquished all the hopes he had formed of entering the army to be released from his present confinement. He consulted with Berenger, who could devise no other plan so likely to procure their immediate liberation, for as the Duke had evidently been engaged in a similar party, he would certainly have a fellow-feeling for him; it was merely a frolic that had been carried rather too far, make the most of it; and though the Duke had not staid late, owing, most likely, to some other engagement, his friends had left the hotel with them, and some of these gentlemen he entertained he hoped would come forward to liberate them. But there was not sufficient reliance to be placed upon this expectation; Bazile observed to Berenger, not one of the officers were with them when they were taken; and they might not be up before they were examined and even sent to prison: then there was ten chances to one whether they would choose it should be known they had been of such a party. In short, he saw no real like-

lihood of being relieved from the impending danger but by applying to the Duke, and intreating him either to release them, or to intercede in their behalf. Berenger was of his opinion; but advised him not to be too humble, as he was so soon, in all probability, to be related to him, he had infinitely better treat the whole as a joke.

If the Duke had not known of *Monsi de Melac's* illness, *Bazile* would not have been so perplexed; however, the application must be speedy, or he must run the risk, which would most likely end in the certainty, of being sent to prison. Having determined, therefore, to make this appeal to the feelings of the aforesaid gentleman, the next difficulty was, how to procure writing materials, and a messenger to convey the important message; these were favours which might be refused.

Daylight had just began to peep into their dark cell, and they remained contemplating each

each others countenances, till Bazile caught sight of the serjeant of the guard near their iron bars ; he instantly addressed him, and asked when he thought they should be liberated ?

“ About that day month, he supposed, if this was their first offence.”

“ This day month !” repeated the terrified Bazile, “ I would not be found here at nine o’clock for the world ! What will it cost to purchase immediate liberty ?”

“ My Captain, the Count de Rochelambut, is not to be bribed, Sir ; and the regiment de Civrac, young gentleman, both officers and soldiers, make it a point to do their duty.”

“ No doubt, my good friend ; but I want to apply to your noble Colonel ; will you undertake to carry him a letter from me ?”

The serjeant looked surprized ; but presumed Bazile must be a man of some consequence to talk in this manner.

“ If you are intimate with the Duke, Sir, he may certainly set you at liberty ; no one else can ; for the Commandant will order you to prison the moment he hears why you were taken into custody ; and I don't think his Grace will be very ready to let you off, if he hears how you all behaved.”

“ My good friend, I am very intimate with the Duke,” said Bazile ; and I am sure he will do all in his power to serve me. Could you procure me a sheet of paper and pen and ink to write a few lines to him ? here is something to make the purchase, slipping a six livre piece into his hand. I hope one of these days to be received into your honourable corps, and you may depend, in that case, upon my protection.”

The serjeant found it impossible to withstand so many weighty reasons ; he therefore promised to do all he dared to serve him, and very soon returned to the bars with pen, ink, and paper.

Having

Having agreed upon what they thought would be most proper, Berenger's back was turned into a writing desk, and Bazile set to work. What a pity, the former observed, the Duke had not been taken up with them; what an infinite deal of anxiety and trouble it would have saved them, as he must have liberated them all.

About six o'clock the letter was finished, and the serjeant was again applied to, and intreated to deliver it immediately. The soldier asked, was he to have the Duke disturbed? as he dared not ask it but upon business of importance concerning the regiment, as he seldom rose before eight o'clock; but in case of necessity he might be called at any time.

Bazile was again puzzled how to act; to have him disturbed was a liberty he could not presume to take; he was therefore obliged to say he did not wish to derange the Duke,

Duke, but begged he would give the letter to his valet de chambre, and desire him to deliver it the moment he went into his master's room. The serjeant promised to do as he desired, and set off with the letter to wait for the valet's getting up.

Bazile was still doomed to pass two hours longer in confinement and suspense, and could not help entertaining some very natural fears that his letter might not at last have the desired effect. His father might come home to breakfast, in that case he would certainly discover every thing; he therefore prayed very fervently he might even have a relapse, if nothing else would keep him in the country. If he could but get home and into the office by nine o'clock, he did not care. Berenger tried to raise his spirits, and prognosticated all would end well. As for the others they had not so much to fear, therefore said but little. His father would be angry, well, and what then?

He

He had been young himself, they supposed, before he was old. What, had he done more than nineteen young men out of twenty did daily? Why was there more harm in their supping at the hotel de Flanders than in the officers doing so? And who would venture to blame their conduct? Besides, some of these gentlemen were orderly men, and they had joined them after supper; therefore, at all events, they were as much to blame as themselves.

But you are to be acquainted with my father said Bazile; some people suppose him very indulgent, but there is not a severer man upon earth; and unfortunately he took it into his head, God knows why or wherefore, or whether it was not half affected may be doubtful, to fanit last night as we were taking a country walk; and he will fancy I had been rejoicing because he was ill, if he hears where I spent the evening. They could not argue this point

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with

with him, only regretted very much they had not Beaver with them, he would have got them off they were certain; however, their only remedy was patience; and each now tried to inspire Bazile with hopes the Duke would break their fetters as soon as he learnt their misfortune.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

THE Duke's valet was not stirring till seven: the serjeant then delivered the letter and message, and gave him a description of the young man that had sent him: "he is very intimate with his Grace," said the serjeant.

"If you come from the person, I suspect," replied the valet, with an incredulous look, "it is the Receiver General's son; he has certainly been here once, but I don't believe he is among my master's friends; however, you may tell him I will deliver his letter as soon as his Grace's bell rings."

With this message the serjeant returned. Bazile renewed his promise of future protection, and rewarded him with another half crown for his punctuality. And thus himself

self and his friends remained in a state of the most disagreeable suspense, certain, however, that a very short time must now decide their fate.

The Duke happened to ring his bell sooner than usual; his valet went with the letter in his hand, which he presented to his master as soon as he had undrawn the curtains, saying, "it was brought half an hour since, and I was desired to give it your Grace the moment you were stirring"

The Duke took the note, opened it, and began to read; but as it was not a very short one, he looked at the bottom before he got half way through it, and neither the signature, style, nor request pleased him: it was infinitely worse written than the one he had received the preceding morning from the same person; but finding whom it came from, and already very angry with the writer, he felt himself particularly offended at his daring to take such a liberty; he therefore
flung

flung the letter upon the bed, and began to rise, in silence revolving in his mind what could have induced young Melac to address him as an equal: he was certainly not sober when he wrote.; and though he looked upon him as infinitely beneath his notice, still, since he had the power, he was determined to punish him for the shameful want of feeling he had displayed over night: his having chosen such a moment for his revels, he could not forgive, as it was very possible, for any thing he knew to the contrary, his father lay at the point of death, while he was disturbing a whole neighbourhood with his follies, and enjoying the chance he thought he had of becoming his own master. But the moment Monsieur de Melac's illness came across his mind, he reflected he had seen him the preceding evening change, in the short space of a minute, from perfect health to apparently a lifeless corpse. He started to think what might be the consequence were his son's follies, not to give Bazile's actions a harsher name,

name, to come to his ears : suppose he was recovered, it might bring on a relapse, and in the other case would certainly increase his disorder : humanity therefore softened the rigour of justice, and without allowing himself time to debate the point any longer, he set out immediately for the guard-house ; and without seeing any one of the prisoners, or having heard the charges brought against them, he gave orders to have them all set at liberty ; but desired the officer upon duty not to inform them to whom they owed their speedy release ; acknowledging to him he was only actuated by his regard for the worthy Receiver General (who was universally esteemed). He then returned home, determined neither to receive any more letters or visits from Bazile, and never take the least notice of him but in his father's presence ; and from that time he looked upon himself as no longer bound to promote the wish he had expressed to enter the service, as he would not now, upon any terms, have received him into his own regiment.

Very

Very little past of course between the prisoners when the officer came to open the doors of their dungeon; it was so much sooner than they had expected to hear from the Duke, that they did not even guess he was their liberator; no, some of the officers who had been in a great measure the cause of their confinement had procured their freedom. The enquiries they made were of no avail; and Bazile sincerely wished he had never dispatched his letter. However, they all hastened home, and Bazile took care to keep out of sight of the windows; he had provided himself with the key of a private door; only one of the maid servants saw him come in, and as he was far from ungenerous among his father's household, she readily promised to keep the secret.

He learnt from this girl that Monf. de Melac was not come home, and the ladies were not come down; his heart leapt for joy at this welcome intelligence. A very short time sufficed him to change his dress, and

the head-ache he had complained of over night, and had made a pretext for his early retreat to bed, would account for his want of colour and haggard looks. He joined his sisters and Madame de Franval at the usual hour in the breakfast room: they all expressed their sorrow to see him look so indifferently, and Madame de Franval mentioned several remedies for the head-ache, which he chose to attribute to the sedentary life he led.

“Then I am sure my father would never be free from it,” said Ermance; “for he frequently sits twice as many hours in the day at his desk as you do; besides, I never heard you complain of it before.” “The heat of the weather and over fatigue may have brought it on,” said Ernestine; “perhaps you hurried home last night:” he agreed he had walked very fast. As they were uncertain when Mr. de Melac would arrive, they waited to a late hour, and had not finished breakfast when he came in; and as they all made
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the usual enquiries, but as none of them mentioned his illness, he gave his son a look of approbation: he seemed perfectly recovered; and as Bazile tried to look unusually pleasant, his excellent father was compleatly deceived, and in the kindest accent observed he did not look very well.

Ernestine immediately told the story of the head-ache, and mentioned its having obliged him to retire to bed much sooner than common.

Mons. de Melac, judging his son after his own heart, solely attributed his altered looks to the uneasiness *his* illness had given him; therefore forbore making any further enquiries into the nature of his complaint, only said he hoped he would be better after breakfast; and that a good night's rest would set all to rights. While he was speaking the surgeon of the regiment de Civrac was announced. Bazile's wonted colour all revived, and as instantly faded; for it is justly said a guilty conscience needs no accuser.

“ Shew

“Shew the gentleman in,” said Mons. de Melac. Bazile was the first who wished to retire; but his father, guessing to whom he owed this visit, desired him to sit still, giving Madame de Franval a look at the same time, which she perfectly understood, and retired with the young ladies by one door, as the surgeon entered by the other; he bowed very politely, and taking a letter from his pocket, presented it to Mons. de Melac, saying, “This, Sir, will, I believe, sufficiently apologize, for my intrusion. I have been to Madame des Ames—you had not been gone more than half an hour, she told me; and, by her direction, I followed you home.”

Mons. de Melac, in the politest terms, intreated him to sit down, and expressed his regret at his having taken so much trouble; then begged to know if he had breakfasted.

“Will you do me the favour to take that meal with me, Sir?” The surgeon bowed, and Bazile was desired to order fresh coffee.

Mons.

Mons. de Melac intreated the surgeon to walk into his study till it was ready. As soon as they were seated, he said he had not been at home five minutes; the surgeon recollected having met him on the way; then said, "Allow me, Sir, to express the pleasure I feel to see you look so well this morning; I was unfortunately out of the way last night, or I should have paid you an earlier, or perhaps I ought to say, a later visit, by the orders of my commander, as your family surgeon was particularly engaged; and as he was not at liberty when I made my enquiries this morning, I proceeded to Madame des Omes, in obedience to the instructions I had received; but his Grace's note will explain the reason of my visit better than I can."

"The Duke does me infinite honour, Sir," said de Melac, "to interest himself so much, and so kindly in my health and welfare;" breaking the seal, and beginning to read as follows:

" My dear Sir,

" As Mr. Vanval is engaged with Madame la Commandante, and not likely to be at leisure this evening, I have taken the liberty to order Mr. Bertrand, in whose skill I place implicit confidence, and for whom I have the highest esteem, to offer you his services upon the present occasion; in hopes you will consult with him about the alarming complaint that seized you a few hours ago. I would have introduced him in person, could I have found him in time; but I have an engagement which obliges me to relinquish that pleasure; so pray let me hear how you really are from my friend when he returns; and believe me with the truest regard and esteem,

Your's,

DE CIVRAC."

This was the note the Duke had left at the surgeon's over night.

A degree of agitation similar to what he
had

had felt the preceding evening, again seized him, which he did all in his power to conceal; but Mr. Bertrand, who sat remarking, with some astonishment, the different changes in his countenance, began to think there was something rather uncommon in his complaint. As the letter, of which he was the bearer, contained nothing likely to affect him, he therefore began to think Mons. de Melac either very nervous, or that his disorder arose from some secret cause. Upon looking up, de Melac caught the surgeon's eyes upon him, and, fearful his looks had betrayed his feelings, said, "The Duke's kindness really overpowers me, and I never was more at a loss to express or define the sentiment he inspires me with: the word gratitude falls so very short of my feelings, I must expunge it from my vocabulary upon this occasion."

"I am really equally at a loss to know how to thank you, Mr. Bertrand, as I ought for the trouble you have taken upon my account."

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"I am

“ I am only very forry, Sir, I was not to be found when there was some chance of my being of any service ; I spent the evening at an old friend's, and did not return home till past ten, when I found that letter lying upon my table, inclosed in one from his Grace, containing his wishes and instructions. I was therefore going to set off for Madame des Omes immediately, meaning to make use of his Grace's name to get out of the town, when I was sent for to the Military Hospital ; two of our soldiers had fallen out, and, in deciding their quarrel, one of them received a most terrible wound with a broad sword ; and before I was able to leave the poor creature, the Duke joined me there ; having heard of the accident, he wished to see the man before he returned. Of course I mentioned what had been my intentions respecting you, Sir ; and his Grace advised me not to think of disturbing you at so late an hour, which, he observed, was not very likely to accelerate your cure. He therefore desired me to
make

make further enquiries early this morning concerning Mr. Vanval; and if he was still detained, to wait upon you in his stead; and I have obeyed his orders in every particular; and I was in hopes, when I first came in, you was not in need of my advice; but I begin to fear you are not so well recovered as your friends could wish.

De Melac was convinced this skilful man was not to be put off with the same excuses his other friends had been. After a smothered sigh, he said, "I certainly find myself much better this morning, Mr. Bertrand; yet I know it would be both absurd and vain to attempt to deceive you into a belief that I am quite well: my last night's illness arose from a latent cause, never, I fear, totally to be removed.

The warm terms in which the Duke de Civrac speaks of you, convinces me, Sir, I am addressing a man of honour: the faintness which seized me so suddenly, and which

H 3 probably

probably the Duke mentioned, was occasioned by a momentary thought that struck me of a something that was within the bare chance of probability—some recent remarks that had been made strengthened my surmise—but I find I am talking nonsense, and you will soon, with justice, think you will have to prescribe for the disorder of my brain.—We are strange mortals, Mr. Bertrand, and hardly at times know what we say or do.—I wish his Grace had not witnessed—De Melac made a sudden pause, as if aware he was going to say more than he intended, and thus proceeded, “he seems so feelingly alive to the distresses and complaints of others, it is almost a pity he should ever be exposed to witness the common casualties that so frequently happen.

“Few men possess such unbounded, such universal philanthropy, Sir,” said the surgeon; but you must endeavour to shake off your complaint: with all our boasted skill

we

we have not yet been able to find a remedy for the disorders of the mind. You have very lately returned from a warm climate, I understand; and a long residence in the West Indies is very apt to enervate the frame; and, as Voltaire very justly said upon a similar occasion, addressing his physician, "*Gare la tempête, malade d'esprit la ressent.*"

De Melac found he had raised the surgeon's curiosity more than he intended; and, by way of putting some check to his enquiries, said, "I have resided abroad full one half of my life, Mr. Bertrand; and I am not yet five and forty; and when I told you my illness proceeded from a latent cause, believe me, it arose from nothing I need be ashamed to acknowledge; though pride sometimes induces us to conceal in our own bosoms many things which might, were they to be revealed, afford great, nay perhaps instantaneous relief to the mind. What I alluded to only concerned myself, and I spoke without thinking; you will therefore particularly

particularly oblige me in not taking notice of my expressions to his Grace, whom, I presume, you will see in the course of the morning; but pray tell him how sensibly affected I am by his kindness; and that I will do myself the honour of personally returning my thanks for all the trouble he has taken upon my account, as early as I think it may be convenient to him, consistent with his military duties, to which I know he pays the strictest attention.

The surgeon assured Mons. de Melac he might depend upon his discretion.

“ You have not been long acquainted with his Grace, I think, Sir?” added he.

“ I have only enjoyed that honour since his arrival at Dunkirk,” said de Melac; “ but I have an infinitely higher esteem for him than I ever felt for any man of his rank I was ever yet acquainted with; and I was formerly in habits of intimacy with many; and
have

have even latterly had the honour of being particularly noticed by several of the great men of the day, the Ministers, I mean."

"I am not at all surprised at your predilection in favour of his Grace. He is universally esteemed and beloved; he looks upon every good man as his equal; and his hand and heart are ever open to distress. He always thinks his frequent visits to our hospital contributes to the cure of the sick soldiers; and I am perfectly of his opinion; for what can be so flattering to people in their situation as the attention of such a man? I am convinced he would not have gone to rest satisfied with himself, if he had not seen the poor fellow I mentioned just now, who met with the accident last night, and who is not naturally a quarrelsome man; and I am sure he thought more of his Colonel's anger than of the wound he had received; but after he had spoke to him, and assured him of his forgiveness, the poor man was comparatively cured, and infinitely more easy.

easy, I am certain. His Grace said, his folly had brought its own punishment with it, and left nothing for him to do, but to exhort him to compose his spirits, and try to get well again as fast as he could."

He then mentioned several anecdotes of the Duke, which did him the highest honour; and concluded by the warmest and most heartfelt panegyrick Mons. de Melac had ever heard bestowed upon one of any rank or station. He sat listening with the utmost delight till breakfast was announced. Bazile had remained in the parlour, but had taken every opportunity during the absence of the servants to approach the door that separated the two rooms, and applying his ear to the key-hole to listen whether any thing past and relative to him or his nightly adventurers; as for the praises of the Duke, he was tired of listening to them, though they were a more agreeable theme just then, than his own follies would have been; and, when

when his father and Mr. Bertrand joined him, he met the eyes of the former with tolerable assurance during breakfast.

The surgeon advised Mons. de Melac to have frequent recourse to a few simple remedies to prevent a return of his fainting fits, and explained their usual causes. De Melac promised to follow his prescriptions, and between eleven and twelve the surgeon took his leave.

CHAP. XII.

AS soon as Mr. de Melac was alone, he took out the Duke's note, and read it once more with the utmost attention. How few people would have taken the same trouble about him as he had done, and upon so short an acquaintance ! His son's looks convinced him how much his rest had been broke by his uneasiness, else he thought he might have sent for Vanval ; but he reflected, this want of attention proceeded from the natural heedlessness of youth, and condemned himself for having sometimes accused him of want of feeling, persuading himself he had as much reason to be satisfied as most other parents had, with the conduct of his children.

His

His recent agitation, and the various reflections which came across him, prevented him from settling to any thing ; it was too soon to pay his visit to the Duke, who would be with his regiment till noon ; he was going to join his daughters, when his old friend Vanval came bustling in. From the description his sisters had given, as soon as he went home, of the officer that had been enquiring for him over night, he guessed it was the Duke de Civrac ; he therefore hastened to his lodgings, and understanding he was upon the parade, followed him thither, and joined the spectators till his Grace was at liberty to speak to him ; he then learned what had occasioned his over-night's visit, and how he had acted in consequence of not having found him at home ; then expressed his joy to perceive Mr. de Melac's cure completed before his arrival ; and proceeded to tell him Madame la Commandante was safely delivered of a daughter. However, having seriously enquired into the nature of his friend's complaint, which de Melac assured

assured him was very trifling, and no longer worth thinking about, he hastened to visit his other patients; and de Melac, having chattered a little while with his daughters, dressed and set out for the Duke's lodgings. He was walking down a large gateway that led into the street, when he heard one of his servants who had preceded him to the *porte cochère*, or folding gates, to answer a knock, say, "Young Mr. de Melac is in the office, give it me."

"No," said the stranger, "I was ordered to deliver it into his own hands,"

De Melac made a sudden stop close behind the servant, wondering what this was that could not be entrusted to the servant; a tall thin youth, who had made the enquiry, was standing with a folded paper in his hand, which he tried to conceal the moment he caught sight of Mr. de Melac. What could his son be engaged in, that seemed to require so much mystery, and which it was evidently not designed

designed he should be made acquainted with?

“What does that young man want?”

“Nothing, Sir,” said the lad, “I only wished to speak to Mr. Bazile, but another time will do,” and was turning from the door.

De Melac’s curiosity increased, and he called out, “Stop, Sir, and give me that paper, I will deliver it to him.”

“I have no paper for him, I only ——”

De Melac repeated his demand in a tone that convinced the youth he chose to be obeyed, putting out his hand while he spoke.

The lad, in great confusion, did as he desired, saying, “it is not for Mr. Bazile, Sir; indeed I hardly know who it is for, because there are several more; indeed that was what I wanted to ask him.”

“Very well,” said de Melac, opening the paper,

paper, and seeing the name of Mr. Bazile de Melac at the top, "pray," said he, "how came my son's name to be annexed to this account, for such I perceive it to be, if it was neither for him nor me? Where did you come from?"

"L'hotel de Flanders, Sir," said the lad.

"Very well," said de Melac, "I suppose you are right; at all events you may leave your bill."

The man bowed, and retired; and de Melac, turning to the servant, who had waited the result of the conference in silence, said, "Don't take any notice of what has past to my son," and returned into the house with the bill in his hand.

The footman, who was the very person that had connived at Bazile's escape overnight, wished he had known the waiter, or taken the paper; but he had not been aware his master was so close upon his heels: poor Bazile, said he to himself, you will be blown
at

at last I am afraid, gueffing this was the bill which had been left unpaid, and knowing French innkeepers are not fond of giving long credits. He wished very much to give Bazile a hint of the impending storm ; but if Mr. de Melac should discover it, which he most likely would from either Bazile's looks or words, he would most probably lose his place ; and he even in some respects dreaded an explanation's taking place, knowing he had let Bazile out, and told his sisters and Madame de Franval, by his desire, that he was gone to bed ; he therefore thought it most prudent to let matters take their own course, and to leave Bazile to get out of his scrape as well as he could.

Mr. de Melac returned into his study to examine the contents of the bill mere accident had thrown into his possession, and was amazed when he saw the date, instantly concluding that was a mistake ; yet Bazile's having gone to bed so *apropos*, and his looks tending to suspicions, he was deter-

determined soon to have them realized ; yet could not persuade himself his son would have chosen such a moment for a merry-making. However, he began to read—supper for six, at three livres ten sous each, one-and-twenty livres.—Seven bottles of English porter, seven livres—four bottles of common wine, six livres—nine of Chambert in Burgundy, forty-five livres—and fourteen of sparkling champaign, eighty-four livres—broken glass, bottles, &c. five livres—total, a hundred and sixty-four livres.

De Melac was half petrified after he had examined the contents. Was it possible six people could have drank such a quantity of liquor ! What a fine drunken party it seemed to have been ! and Bazile had certainly officiated as master of the ceremonies, by his having taken upon himself to pay the bill. He dared not trust himself to talk with him about it just then ; indeed he determined to make farther enquiries before he entered upon the subject. His daughters and Ma-

dame

de Franval he was convinced were not in the secret; and since Bazile had a method of going out privately of nights, this was not the first time, he imagined, he had been engaged in similar frolicks.

Having rather removed his first emotion, he set out once more for the Duke's, determined to proceed from thence to the Hotel de Flanders. When he reached the Duke's apartments, he was not come home, but was expected every minute. De Melac was going away, when the valet came running down, and entreated he would walk in; his Grace told him he should be in soon after twelve, and had ordered him, should Mr. de Melac call before that time, to entreat he would do him the favour to wait his return. De Melac readily consented, and was shewn into the dressing room.

The servant had hardly had time to retire, before de Melac heard two people talking in the adjoining apartment, the door between

tween the two rooms being rather upon the jar; one of them said, "Poh! nonsense, 'tis only René I tell you, and he is gone out again." The other chose to be satisfied, therefore took a hasty peep into the dressing-room, which de Melac observed in a large glass he sat opposite to, without being seen by the servant, as the door shaded him when quite open. He did not sit unusually quiet, but the noise the servants made prevented them from hearing him, being in a great bustle putting the room to rights before his Grace's return, began by making the bed, cursing the clock for being so fast, and blaming each other for being out of the way; when one of them said, "what is this? Oh, one of his Grace's love letters; I must see what it contains."

"I am sure it is nothing of any consequence, by its being left here," said the other; throw it down, let us make haste, or he will be at home before we have half done."

Curiosity got the better of her partner's incli-

inclination to work, and she was determined upon examining the letter; having looked at the bottom, it is not from a lady however, and it is signed B. de Melac.

“Who the devil is that?” said the other.

“That’s what I want to know?”

This preamble fully arrested de Melac’s attention. Was it possible his son could be in habits of correspondence with his Grace! He sat very quiet in hopes of hearing more, and was not disappointed.

The servant who had found the letter, began to read aloud for the benefit of his companion. De Melac lost some part of the contents, but heard very plainly, “After
“your Grace left us we sallied forth, mean-
“ing to go home; it might be between one
“and two this morning; but happening
“to laugh rather too loud, and say some-
“thing in sport to a party of your men, who
“were patrolling the streets, they instantly
“seized

“ seized and conveyed us to their guard-
“ house, where we still remain, and are in-
“ formed we shall be carried before the Com-
“ mandant as soon as he is up, and perhaps
“ sent to prison for a mere innocent frolic,
“ if your Grace’s wonted generosity does not
“ prompt you to stand our friend upon the
“ occasion.”

Here the reader stopped to comment upon the freedom of the style, and said, this B. de Melac must be a man of consequence, though they neither of them recollected the name. This is the letter the serjeant brought before any of us were up this morning; I would lay my life upon it—ten to one it is. I wonder whether his Grace released them from their confinement, for I am sure he was never caught strolling in the streets at such an hour.

So, thought Mr. de Melac, this was the way this jovial party concluded their evening; and no longer wondered the bill had
been

been left unpaid. But the words "after your Grace left us," struck him very forcibly. Was it possible the Duke could be amongst them? He looked over the bill, but that did not satisfy his curiosity; that only told him six people had supped at the hotel de Flanders. From what Mr. Bertrand had said, the Duke was at the military hospital between eleven and twelve, and had mentioned having an engagement upon his hands, in the note he had received from the surgeon, therefore he certainly was not of the party; he would not have lowered himself so much. Yet there was something in all this he could not fathom; there was no other person of the name of Melac at Dunkirk. The letter, being upon the bed, tallied with the date of the bill. From what the servant had said, it had been brought very early from the guard house and delivered to the Duke, he supposed, before he was up; therefore his son certainly had seized the opportunity *his* illness had afforded him to get drunk at a tavern, and then
make

make a riot in the streets. Wishing to hear more, he was almost afraid to breathe, when he heard one of the servants say, "Lay it down, lay it down, here is the Duke;" and the door between the two rooms was instantly shut. In a very few seconds his Grace entered by the other, and instantly addressing de Melac said, "You don't know how happy I am, my dear friend, to see you thus well recovered." His countenance gave strength to his words. De Melac's varied so much during his kind address, that he added, with less vivacity, "I am afraid I was too hasty in my conclusions; sit down: why did you come out, at least in the middle of the day? For all what you once said, I don't think the climate of Flanders agrees with you. I wish you had been placed at Dijon."

De Melac attempted to thank his Grace, but he would not listen to him.

"I am perfectly acquainted with what you wish to say. Bertrand repeated the kind
and

and polite things you said to him this morning, so think no more of a trivial service I looked upon in some respect as my duty, for I certainly only followed the golden rule. So now tell me very seriously how you find yourself, and how you like my friend Bertrand?"

"I am really infinitely better your Grace, and determined to follow Mr. Bertrand's prescriptions, of whom I have already formed a very high opinion."

The Duke seemed pleased, and expatiated very warmly upon his skill and humanity.

De Melac acquiesced in these just praises, and mentioned what had passed between them respecting the wounded soldier; adding, "though he was very sorry for the poor fellow's misfortune, he was very glad Mr. Bertrand had been prevented from taking such a disagreeable ride to Madame des Ormes at such a time of the night."

"I believe the Flemish beer," said the Duke smiling, "is too potent for the heads of my soldiers; they are more accustomed to wine. As I flatter myself none of them are given to drinking, a small quantity is sufficient to intoxicate them; and some people, when in liquor, are very quarrelsome; even the best tempered men in the world and most prudent at other times, often act absurdly."

"Your remark is very just," said de Melac, determined to seize this opportunity to discover, if possible without appearing impertinent, what the Duke knew of his son's indiscretion; he therefore took out the bill, pretending it to him.

"I don't think your Grace's soldiers drank near so much as any of the six gentlemen who composed that party; though God forbid I should judge any one wrongfully; some of them may be very sober men; I only wish I could suppose my son was among that number."

The

The Duke cast his eyes over the paper, and wondered how de Melac came by it, and found his endeavours to conceal Bazile's shameful want of feeling had proved abortive. Not chusing for various reasons to express his disapprobation, he continued, "I hope none of these gentlemen have afforded employment for a surgeon; though I rather suppose they made a few false steps in their way home."

"No doubt, Sir; though I am still ignorant of the result of this jovial meeting, the knowledge of which fell in my way accidentally."

Both the Duke and de Melac were equally embarrassed; the former, afraid of lowering Bazile, consequently of speaking his real thoughts; the latter hardly dared give way to his curiosity, or express his displeasure from uncertainty whether the Duke was not among those he so justly thought deserving of censure. Unwilling to give his opinion of Bazile's conduct, his Grace said, "You

have not seen your son, I presume, Sir, since that bill has been in your possession?"

"I have not, your Grace; nor could any thing short of such a convincing proof have induced me to believe he would have chosen last night for his revels."

"He is very young, my dear Sir, and it may have been an engagement of long standing."

"I wish I was of that way of thinking; but he certainly did not know till very late in the evening I should sleep out of town; and I always expect to see him at supper, or to know where, or with whom he is engaged. He knows I am never averse to his joining any proper party."

"Then let us put the most favourable construction upon his behaviour," said the Duke with a good natured smile, "and suppose he tried to drive away sorrow; no very unusual thing, though not always an effectual remedy."

"You are too good," said de Melac, convinced now he was not among his
son's

son's guests ; indeed it was so very unlikely, that before he hardly gave the idea a moment's serious consideration.

“ Whatever might be his reason for acting thus foolishly, I shall take some effectual method to prevent his spending so much money in future at a tavern. He certainly may, nay, shall, find out some other means of getting rid of his allowance. But I must go to the hotel de Flanders, as I am very curious to learn the names of his thirsty companions.”

“ Then I believe I have it in my power to satisfy you in that respect without your taking so much trouble, my dear friend.

De Melac looked at his Grace ; his first, and what he deemed unlikely suspicions, all revived, and he wished very much he could have recalled his last words.

The Duke, unwilling to keep him in suspense, immediately told him where and with

whom he had supped ; how he had learned his son was in the same house ; who was of Bazile's party ; and what had induced him to go into their room ; concluding with entreating he would look upon the whole as a youthful frolic, which, he had no doubt, had been carried far greater lengths than was at first intended ; and hoped that reflection would induce him to forgive the share his son had taken in it.

“ Would to Heaven,” said de Melac, that Priest may feel the effects of his folly for this month ! Till now I always thought the English catholics infinitely more strict than those of any other nation.”

“ They are in general so, but Mr. Bever, I must allow, is an exception to the rule ; for, in my opinion, he was more reprehensible than any of the party,”

“ There I agree with your Grace ; but you don't know, as you left them so early, what time they broke up ?”

“ I have been informed since, to be very honest with you, they have already been very severely punished for their folly ; they spent the night in confinement ; and I received a petition this morning to liberate them, which I did between eight and nine, with a view, I must confess, of keeping you in ignorance of what, I cannot say, exactly met my approbation. Nay, now I see, my good friend, you are seriously angry with your son. I will allow I thought him at the time, and do now in some respects, to blame ; and wish most sincerely he had chosen any other time to play the fool ; but if he bears any resemblance to his excellent father, the greatest punishment you can inflict upon him will be, to call at the hotel de Flanders in your way home, discharge the bill, and leave him to discover what you have done ; his own reflections will be of more service to him, in such a case, than any thing you could either say or do.

The tears stood in de Melac's eyes ; he replied in a voice scarcely articulate, " I will follow your advice, my noble friend."

The Duke took his hand, and while his countenance expressed the most tender concern, said, " I can't bear to see you thus affected, my worthy, my amiable friend ; consider his age ; believe me you will find him all you can wish in a very few years ; your prayers, and more especially your example, will soon reform the present errors in his conduct.

De Melac's eyes met those of the Duke's, which beamed with heartfelt sensibility, and glistened while endeavouring to cheer the spirits of this excellent father : his hand trembled, and the tears, no longer to be restrained, rolled down his cheeks. Totally unable to speak, he would have retired, but the Duke prevented him, saying, " We must not part thus, you shall sit down, and endeavour

your to compose your agitation, and drink a glass of wine by way of raising your spirits.

De Melac could not refuse to do honour to this fresh proof of his Grace's attention, and soon after took his leave, proceeded immediately to the hotel de Flanders, paid the bill without asking a single question, and returned home, determined not to mention the matter to his son.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

MR. de Melac went into the office as soon as he reached his own house; found Bazile very busy; and not having the least suspicion of what had happened, affected an air of concern when his father entered, and asking in a tone he endeavoured to render plaintive, how he found himself. Of all the vices he could have been guilty of, Mr. de Melac had the greatest aversion to hypocrisy; yet consistently with the determination he had formed, he could not just then take any notice of his son's endeavours to impose upon him; yet his countenance no longer bore the same marks of approbation it had done at breakfast; and making Bazile a short answer, he seated himself at one of the desks, and

and began to inspect some accounts he wished to have in readiness for the farmer general, who was daily expected at Dunkirk. Every trifle alarmed the culprit.—What could have put his father out of humour! Perhaps he had not found the Duke at home, or had met with a cool reception; for if he had heard any thing about him, he would not have sat down to examine what the clerks had been about before he had taken him to task, and pretty severely.

Notwithstanding this fancied security, he was remarkably diligent, and met the family at dinner with forced smiles; was particularly attentive to every word which fell from his father's lips; who on his side forced himself to behave to him as usual, though his over officiousness, and different changes of countenance, did not escape his penetrating eyes. Soon after coffee, having previously, contrary to his general rule, asked his father if he should want him during the course of the afternoon, and received a very cool negative

gative to his demand. He set out upon his rambles, meaning to call first and pay the bill, and then to proceed to Berenger's to enquire how he and his other companions had escaped, and whether his master or their fathers had any suspicion where they had spent the night.

His first visit, therefore, was to the Hotel de Flanders. The master, a true Flamand, who had made a fortune in his business, was sitting smoking his pipe in his court-yard; neither moved nor touched his hat when Bazile approached him; (indeed it would have been as much as he could have done for the Duke de Civrac) and upon his saying "I am come to pay for our supper, Sir," looked at him from head to foot in some surprise; then taking his pipe out of his mouth, said, "You need not give yourself the trouble, Mr. Bazile, 'tis already paid for." This was so truly agreeable a surprise, Bazile asked no further explanation; only said, "Very well," and hastened to his friend

friend Berenger, reflecting who could have been so obliging.

“Not the last mentioned gentleman, he was pretty sure.”

Bever next came across him; but he reflected he could hardly spare enough to keep himself in powder, pomatum and bands; and that he now sported a cassock that had belonged to his predecessor; and was besides in every body's debt. The other three were still less capable.

Berenger, however, would most likely be able to set his mind at ease; but he was even more surprized than Bazile had been, and said it must have been settled by some of the officers; and, at all events, what did it signify who had been so obliging?

Bazile declared he would know whom he ought to thank. They returned together to the tavern; when, in answer to their earnest enquiries, the landlord, with the utmost

most sang froid, said, "Gentlemen, Mr. de Melac settled it."

"My father!" said Bazile, motionless with horror and dismay at an answer he so little expected.

"Yes, Sir," said the Flemish landlord; "I know of no other of that name in Dunkirk."

"But how came he to know I was here last night? What did he say? When was he here?"

"My wife took the money; and I neither know nor care what past; only wish you would allow me to finish my pipe in peace."

They walked away, but Bazile was obliged to lean upon his friend's arm; and the moment they were in the street, exclaimed, in a doleful tone, "What must I do? I shall never hear the last of this! and may depend upon being obliged to spend my evenings at home for this twelvemonth."

"When did you last see your father?" said Berenger.

"I left

“ I left him in the saloon playing at backgammon with Clemence.”

“ Well, and do you suppose he would not have told you of it ?” said the friend : “ I would lay any wager, from the landlord’s behaviour, some of the officers settled the account, and desired the fellow to tell you it was your father, in order to frighten you.”

A ray of hope darted across Bazile’s mind. This was very possible ; for what could have induced his father to have remained silent about such an affair, if he was acquainted with it ; he would never have lost so good an opportunity of reprimanding him. Berenger assured him such forbearance was not in Mr. de Melac’s character ; therefore he had certainly nothing to fear. Thus encouraged Bazile’s spirits, returned ; he went home early, and soon drew Clemence, who was still, nay always his confident in any thing that concerned his family affairs, on one side, and asked her if she had heard their father mention having been at the Hotel de Flanders,

Flanders, or having paid any bill for him. She wished very much to find out to what he alluded; but Bazile evaded all her enquiries, and soon perceived she knew nothing about the matter: at all events, therefore, he concluded the Duke, (whom he had sat down in his own mind for rather a proud man, fearful of lying under any obligation to people so much his inferiors,) had settled the bill, and set them at liberty; but not chusing to afford them an opportunity of returning him thanks, had done this privately; he was perfectly satisfied with the solution of this puzzling enigma. He appeared in high spirits at supper, and attributed Mr. de Melac's absence of mind and unusual thoughtfulness to the remains of his illness: he communicated his conclusions next day to Berenger, who confirmed him in this opinion, and who advised him to follow the Duke's example, and consign the whole silly business to oblivion.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

NO one could be more diligent than Bazile for the ensuing four days ; if he did venture out, it was for an hour in an evening, when he knew his father was safe. On the fifth, during dinner, his sisters were saying they had not seen their grandmother for two days, and would pay her an early visit the ensuing morning. " Suppose you accompany me there this evening," said Mr. de Melac.

They readily consented, and Bazile, eager to display his politeness, said, with his father's leave he would join their party. He now thought himself perfectly secure ; wanted once more to find an opportunity of addressing the Duke concerning his taking him into his regiment ; which he looked upon as almost agreed upon between them, if Mr.
de

de Melac would but consent to his wishes. It was therefore necessary the subject should be again started in his presence; and this was the road his Grace usually took, and where there was the best chance of meeting him.

His father, though deeply hurt by the want of feeling he had displayed, was nevertheless very much pleased by the visible alteration for the better in his behaviour; he began to think the Duke's method of punishment a good one.

Early in the evening Mr. de Melac, his two daughters, and Bazile, set out for Madame des Ormes. Madame de Franval had got a slight cold, and chose to stay at home. At the entrance of the village they were overtaken by the Duke, mounted upon a beautiful Andalusian courser, and followed only by a groom. Mr. de Melac and his son remarked they had never seen this handsome horse before. When the Duke stopped

to

to pay them his compliments, they expressed their admiration of him in the strongest terms, Bazile wished he had just such another, in hopes this clever speech would lead to his favourite subject; but the Duke no longer having either desire or intention to promote his wishes, took no sort of notice of them, and in reply to Mr. de Melac, said he had not rode the horse since he had been at Dunkirk, owing to a cold he caught upon the road, of which he was now perfectly recovered, and very impatient for his usual exercise. "Is he at all vicious?" said de Melac.

"Not in the slightest degree; on the contrary as gentle as a lamb, and as playful."

Clemence said she should like to see a specimen of his playfulness. The Duke, to oblige her, as they were upon the green before Madame des Ormes' house, said he should perform some military evolutions. He instantly did as he was ordered, and paraded round the green to the sound of his master's voice.

De

De Melac stood contemplating both rider and horse in silent admiration; while the young ladies were loud in their plaudits; and Bazile was not tardy in complimenting the Duke, who now brought his horse towards them in a foot pace, and desired him to pay his obedience to the ladies, which he did, by raising his fore feet and letting them fall again very gently. When the Duke, in pulling out his handkerchief, dropped a letter, Mr. de Melac instantly picked it up and restored it to him.

“ I don’t believe any body was ever troubled with such a miserable head as myself,” said his Grace, “ I wrote this letter just before I came down stairs, and put it in my pocket to give to one of my servants for the post; it totally escaped my memory, and I am afraid it will be now too late.”

Mr. de Melac looked at his watch, and said the groom by making haste might be in time; if the bag was closed it would be opened for his Grace. The groom was instantly dispatched, and the Duke told him

him he would wait his return at Madame des Ormes.

De Melac and his Grace were upon too familiar terms to render any compliments necessary on either side upon this occasion.

The Duke dismounted at the little gate, and hung his horse upon the paling, saying he could depend upon him, and would take a walk in the garden, as his servant would not be long. Bazile offered to watch the horse, but he assured him there was no necessity; he was certain he would not move. They therefore all walked into the house, and after asking the old lady how she did, and chatting with her a few minutes, the Duke and Mr. de Melac, equally fond of being *tête-a-tête*, walked into the garden, and left the young people to amuse their grandmother. Bazile, not being asked, dared not follow them, though he longed more than ever to bring about the wished for explanation: he therefore walked into the front court,

court, and began to point out to his sisters the various beauties of the *Andalusian*.

"You are a great judge, no doubt," said Clemence, who had followed him; "and could you ride as well as the Duke I might pay some attention to your remarks.

What astonishing agility he displayed.

You have the equestrian art to practice, you find, before you think of getting into the cavalry."

"Why, do you suppose, child," said Bazile, "there is the slightest difficulty in riding a managed horse trained as this has been, whom you have only to order about as you would a dog? I will soon convince you how easy it is to make a charger do as his rider chuses."

"For heaven's sake, Bazile, don't be silly enough to expose your neck through vanity, and run the risk of offending both the Duke and my father!"

"They are both safe, my little Clemence; and I must take one round of the green," flinging the horse's bridle over his neck, and

offering to mount ; but the beast, conscious, it may be presumed, Bazile had no right to take such a liberty, refused to stand still ; he coaxed him, patted his neck, and made several unsuccessful attempts.

Ernestine, who had seen what he was about from the windows, came out to Clemence ; and though she could not help joining in her mirth, advised her brother very seriously to let the horse alone ; but Bazile's honour was in question, and he would not give up the point ; therefore began to threaten the horse into obedience ; but upon a peasant, who was passing by, coming to his assistance, and holding his head, he was able to scramble into the saddle ; then calling out to his sisters with an air of triumph, " There," said he, " I look something like a soldier ; if I had but the Duke's uniform, I should be quite the thing !"

" You would still want his figure," said Clemence, " but pray get down, for I am sure you won't be able to fit that gentle creature

creature long." The horse began to prance while she was speaking; at first Bazile was pleased; he had got a cane in his hand, which he dignified by the name of his sword, and began to issue his orders to the horse as he had observed the Duke do, and to canter round the green. In a few seconds the *Andalusian* became ungovernable to such a rider; Bazile's shoulders were above his head—he dropped his cane—his hat soon followed—he was obliged to seize the mane to save himself from falling. His sisters, now seriously alarmed at seeing his danger, and unable to afford him any assistance, ran screaming into the house, in order to call the Duke; but as the horse, no longer under any command, followed the bent of his own inclinations, he turned down a little lane that ran by the side of the garden where the Duke and Mr. de Melac were walking: the sound of a horse advancing full speed, made his Grace look over the hedge; he was just in time to give the word of command, which made the horse stop so instantaneously, and
take

take a kind of turn to the spot from whence the voice, he so perfectly recognized, proceeded, that poor Bazile found himself in the middle of the very hedge his Grace was looking over. The Duke, assisted by Mr. de Melac, soon pulled him out, and before his sisters had reached the spot, he was upon his legs in the garden.

“For heaven’s sake,” exclaimed Ernestine, “how came you here, Bazile?”

The Duke burst out a laughing—“Indeed, my lovely little friend, he made an odd kind of an *entrée*!” Then, turning to the culprit, who was pale as death, and whose hair stood erect, said, “I hope you have received no hurt, Mr. Bazile.”

He was still too much frightened to speak; and Mr. de Melac having recovered from the momentary terror he felt for his safety, asked him, very sternly, how he dared take the liberty to touch, much more to mount, that horse.

The Duke instantly interfered in his behalf, saying he was convinced Mr. Bazile had no intention to offend; and he was very happy he had escaped unhurt: he then got over the hedge and led the horse, who had stood quite still, as if waiting his further orders, round to the front door, and was in reality highly pleased with what he had done.

Mr. de Melac and his children joined the Duke, when the groom rode up, as he was once more going to hang his horse to the gate; and as Bazile's accident had broke off his conversation with Mr. de Melac, (and he was not sorry to afford him an opportunity of giving his son a lecture, which, in his opinion, he deserved) he immediately took leave; but when he was going to mount, ordered his horse to fall upon his knees, which the docile creature instantly did; his Grace put his leg over, and allowed him to rise gently with him upon his back, saying, "You will find this, Mr. Bazile, a much more

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more convenient method of mounting and dismounting than the one you adopted."

Ermance laughed, and Bazile, who had now recovered his speech, begged pardon for the liberty he had taken, protesting he only meant to walk the horse once round the green.

"You are only, like my Andalusian," said his Grace, smiling, "rather out of training, Mr. Bazile; a little practice may make you an excellent cavalier:" then bowing to de Melac and the young ladies, he set off full gallop.

The last speech hurt Bazile very much; it contained, in his opinion, such a tacit reproach of his want of skill, as made him afraid this misfortune would prevent his Grace from keeping his word respecting his going into the army. His father interrupted his reflections by taking him to task very severely for his late freak.

Bazile, never more impatient of controul, endeavoured to defend his conduct.

“ This is not the first liberty by many you have taken with that gentleman,” said the highly offended father ; “ because he honours me with his friendship, you think you have a right to do and say what you please ! Don’t fancy, Bazile, my late forbearance has proceeded from kindness !”

Mr. de Melac’s looks were so much more expressive than his word, that the conscious Bazile shrunk from his scrutinizing eyes, convinced, now, he was perfectly acquainted with his late adventure ; fearful of any further explanation, he said no more.

At dusk they took leave of Madame des Ormes, and returned to Dunkirk ; but Bazile, thoroughly humbled, never ventured to mix in the conversation, and sincerely repented he had joined the party. He contrived to see his dear Berenger for a few mi-

nutes before supper, and imparted the fears he began to entertain, and his astonishment at his father, who in general being so fond of moralizing upon the most trivial event, had hitherto been so accountable silent.

“ The Duke told him every thing,” said the sagacious Berenger, “ and has sworn him to secrecy upon it ; but, I dare say, though his Grace certainly meant to pay his court to your rigid old dad at your expence, he represented every thing in the most favourable light ; so keep up your spirits, and remember the old fellow is not immortal !”

“ True, my dear friend. Adieu ! I dare not stay out late ;” and thus they parted, as Bazile did not chuse to mention his recent accident, even to this favourite friend, for fear it should lower him in his opinion.

CHAP. XV.

ON the Tuesday following, Vanval called at Mr. de Melac's, as he frequently did, by his desire, while the family were drinking their coffee after dinner.

As soon as he was seated, he said, " You don't absolutely owe this visit, my good friend, to the liking I have for this delicious beverage (alluding to the coffee) and which you always have in the greatest perfection ; for I came this time upon a different errand. There is to be a grand shew at Ypres (the place of my nativity) next Sunday ; the new church is to be dedicated on that day ; the bishop is to perform the ceremony, and there will be a great many fine folks assembled upon this grand occasion.

occasion. My nephew, who resides there, writes me word vast preparations are going forward. I have not been there for some years, so mean to take this opportunity of paying him a visit, and shall take Julien, my eldest nephew, with me. Now, if you and your family can make it convenient to accompany us, we shall feel ourselves highly honoured; I cannot absolutely promise you accommodations in my nephews house; but he has engaged two private apartments among his friends for a dozen of mine, if I bring so many. I know these young ladies will be amused; and I promise you Ypres is worth seeing, and will never appear to more advantage than upon this occasion; so what say you, my dear Sir, to my proposal?

Mr. de Melac had consulted his daughters' looks while Vanval was speaking, and saw they wished to go; and he had but one objection to make to this kind unceremonious offer, and that he did not chuse to acknowledge. He thanked Vanval in the

politeſt terms, but ſaid, much as he wiſhed to gratify his childrens' inclinations, and oblige him, he was not abſolutely ſure whether in this inſtance, it would be in his power; but, with his leave, he would defer giving his final answer till the next day.

“Only let it be favourable mind,” continued Vanval; “my nephew is *un bon gros flamand*, like myſelf; you will meet with a hearty welcome; but no ceremony: and the more company I take with me, the happier he will be to ſee me;—ſo I won't ſay any more upon the ſubject.”

The converſation then turned upon the news of the day; and the ſurgeon, who was an errand goſſip, ſtaid ſo late, he prevented Mr. de Melac from taking his uſual evening walk; he therefore only made the tour of the ramparts and called upon the Duke on his return, who was alone, and very happy to ſee him. He told him Madame des Ormes was very well, as he had looked in upon her *en paſſant*, in hopes of finding him there;

there ; so, to make himself amends for his disappointment, he should keep him to supper. No proposal could have been more agreeable to de Melac, who sent word home for his family not to wait for him.

In the course of the evening, the Duke said he was going within a few days to make a little excursion.

De Melao's countenance instantly changed, fearful he was going entirely to leave Dunkirk, but endeavoured to conceal his perturbation.

“ I hope, Sir, you will not be long absent ? ”

“ Only a few days,” said his Grace, who had remarked the visible alteration in Mr. de Melac's looks when he mentioned his intentions ; was it possible, he thought, this worthy man should be so much interested in what he did, or where he went ? and to what else could he attribute these visible changes

his countenance, and these sudden starts of feeling? for he hardly knew by what other name to define de Melac's agitation.

As these momentary reflections occasioned a sort of pause in his discourse, de Melac had recourse to his handkerchief, turning his head another way to avoid the piercing expressive eyes of the Duke, who said, "I am going to Ypres upon a visit to the Bishop to meet a few friends, and be present at the dedication of a new church."

De Melac, whose cheerfulness was revived by this unexpected but truly agreeable intelligence, replied, "I have also had an invitation to Ypres to be present at this grand ceremony, which I am assured will be very well worth seeing."

"No doubt," said the Duke; I hope you mean to go, and to take your daughters, to whom it will be a greater novelty than to yourself."

"I be-

“ I believe I shall, said Mr. de Melac, who, the moment he learned the Duke’s engagement, had determined to accompany the surgeon, and mentioned what passed between him and Vanval upon the occasion.

“ How do you propose going ?” said the Duke.

“ In my coach, with my own horses ; it is not more than thirty miles, they are very strong, and will do it with ease in a day.”

“ Certainly,” said the Duke ; and after a moment’s reflection, said, “ I wish you would allow me to arrange the party, as we are all going the same way, and to the same place.”

“ Pray do, Sir ; I promise you beforehand, to conform in every respect to your wishes.”

“ Vanval does not keep a carriage ; yours is large enough to hold six ; therefore suppose you sent the young people under his and Madame de Franval’s care for this journey, and accompany me in my chaise alone ; I shall go post, therefore we need not set out

so early as they will ; and I can set you down wherever you take up your quarters. I know mine is a very selfish proposal, but if you will agree to it, you will oblige me very much."

" I am not so much my own enemy as to start any objections to so flattering and so agreeable a proposal, replied de Melac. What day do you mean to leave Dunkirk?"

" I did intend to set off on Thursday, said the Duke, but will make it Friday if that day suits you better."

" I beg you would pursue your original intentions. I shall like to have a little time to look about me before the grand fight."

" Very well, then on Thursday I will dine with you ; you will not be in any fear then either for mine or your lovely Ernestine's heart ; for I am perfectly acquainted with the reasons which have hitherto prevented you from inviting me to your house, and really commend your prudence, as you may have done both your daughter and me a
very

very essential piece of service." This was spoke in a half-joking way.

Mr. de Melac coloured, but said, I am very glad you, in some respects, do me so much justice ; my fears for the happiness of my daughters have certainly induced me to act as you suppose ; though I hope your Grace will believe me when I assure you, I never entertained the slightest doubts of your honour, but you are young, handsome, and fascinating ; my daughters have eyes, and if a fond father may be credited, no small share of judgment ; therefore I think, situated as I am, you would have acted as I have done."

"Nay, nay, my good friend, don't look serious ; upon my honour I approve of your conduct, though not of the appeal you have just made to my vanity. Yet, believe me, I should be very sorry were I to have the slightest reason to suppose I was ever the occasion of a moment's uneasiness to any lady, much more to one of your daughters. Love,
I am

I am told, is a very strange, a very ungovernable passion : as yet I can say it has not broke my rest. However, our plan is settled, you accompany me in my carriage, and I dine with you at one ; so now let's take a trip to the West Indies."

The conversation immediately changed to the various productions of the different island, mode of treating the slaves, &c. ; and soon after eleven Mr. de Melac took his leave ; told his family at breakfast the next morning when, and how they were to go to Ypres ; and expressed the pleasure he felt he had been able to make it convenient to gratify the curiosity of his daughters. He then set out for Mr. Vanval's, who was very happy to find he intended to honour his nephew with his company, and very much pleased with the Duke's arrangement. Being naturally of a saving disposition, and finding this would relieve him from every travelling expence, acknowledged one great reason that carried him to Ypres (curiosity apart) was, to allow his nephew,

nephew, Julien, time to take leave of his mother and sisters, as he meant very speedily to accompany him to Paris, where he wished him to walk the hospitals, as he had done himself for a few years before he began to practice for himself; his other nephew, Celestin, must supply his place during his absence. He hoped the shew at Ypres would prove worth the jaunt, and as the Duke was to be present upon the occasion, he had but little doubt it would be something magnificent, and would serve him to entertain his patients with for a month. Mr. de Melac smiled at his volubility, and soon took his leave to make the necessary preparation for their journey.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

WHEN this expedition was first mentioned, Bazile was very much afraid he should not have been included ; but Mr. de Melac wished too much to have him under his own eyes to inflict such a punishment upon him. The moment he found, therefore, he was to accompany his father and sisters, he hurried to his tailors and gave orders for a most shewy suit, which he insisted upon having by eight o'clock the next morning, even if the master and all his men passed the night in getting it ready. As he was a good customer he was punctually obeyed ; and even appeared in this smart suit by nine, the time they all usually met at breakfast.

Of

Of late Mr. de Melac had taken very little notice of his dress, but it struck him on the present occasion, as being so very preposterous ; he spoke to him very severely : “ Such gaudy cloaths were even absurd when a man was dressed, but absolutely ridiculous to travel in ; Vanvals family would certainly form a very mean opinion of his intellects from his appearance : he therefore very seriously desired him to change them at present, if he chose to sport them on the Sunday ; he, Mr. de Melac, should have this consolation, there would be so many things to admire, that his absurdity might pass unnoticed in the crowd.”

Bazile dared not make any objections, though he never was more mortified, as he had hoped to dazzle the whole generation of the Vanvals, and inspire them with the most profound respect, by his brilliant appearance. He retreated therefore to his own room much dissatisfied, and in less than a quarter of an hour returned, dressed rather
more

in character, as his father told him. His sisters laughed at the alteration he had made, and consoled him by prognosticating he would be the most shewy figure at church.

About ten they set off, called for Vanval and his nephew as they passed their door, and proceeded to Ypres. Mr. de Melac spent the intervening time in giving orders to his clerks, who were all men he could depend upon, and making every other preparation for his journey.

About half past twelve the Duke was announced. De Melac was in very high spirits, and seemed more than usually pleased to see his favourite young friend, who, though he thought looked more to advantage in regimentals, yet almost wished he might never wear them again; but this he kept to himself. An elegant little dinner had been prepared for this distinguished visitor; and between two and three they set off in a travelling

velling post chaise, attended by four outriders.

It was now the latter end of August, and they wished to reach Ypres before dark; they found, allowing for the various necessary delays, they should not have much time to spare. The postillions were therefore ordered to make the best of their way, and eager to obey the command, made such haste over the stones, and such a noise with their whip, that the travellers found it impossible to converse with any degree of comfort, till they were without the town, when the purport of their journey naturally became their subject.

Mr. de Melac asked the Duke, if he had ever been present at a ceremony of this kind?

“Never, my dear Sir; nor do I think curiosity would have carried me so far upon the present occasion; had not I had
a much

a much more powerful motive for this undertaking."

Mr. de Melac was not naturally curious, still he could not help displaying some symptoms of that sort upon the present occasion ; and, by way of leading to a farther explanation said, " Some love affair, I presume."

" Why, upon my word, when I first mentioned this journey to you, I had great expectations this shew would have introduced me to my intended bride ; but a letter I received yesterday from the Bishop damped all my hopes ; except, indeed, the good man, which I rather suspect, means to take me by surprize."

" Has your Grace any serious thoughts of altering your condition," said de Melac.

" I have been engaged for years, my dear friend, even before I was born ! Marriages among people of any rank in France are mere *arrangement de famille* you know, and generally foreseen for some length of time. Whether it is right or wrong I cannot pretend
to

to say, but I am seriously engaged to the eldest daughter of my mother's most intimate friend; as yet I have not been allowed to pay my devoirs to the young lady."

"I know these sort of arrangement are very common; nor have I any doubt but the young lady in question is a very proper match for your Grace; still I do not absolutely approve of such marriages. My children's situation in life happily, in my opinion, precludes them from such early engagements; it appears to me the heart ought to be consulted before two people meet at the altar."

"Your remark is that of a fond father and an excellent man," said the Duke; "still I think the French are, in general, as happy in their married state as many other nations: and more or less, in every country, among persons of distinction, marriage is a sort of *affair de convenance*. My intended bride, I am assured, is remarkably handsome; but we all differ in our opinion of female beauty: what I think of infinitely more importance, she is still

still more remarkable for the sweetness of her temper.

Madame de Mancove is the eldest daughter of the Marquis de Neufpont, and is, in the world's opinion, nearly angelic. I have always supposed these animated descriptions were merely calculated to raise my curiosity, and make me fall in love with an ideal portrait; but I am not of a very romantic turn, nor is my imagination easily inflamed.

“Perhaps you may have heard of the family, Sir; for Mr. de Neufpont commanded in the West Indies last war—is now a General Officer—and will, in all probability, soon be a Marshal de France, as few men are more esteemed in his profession.”

The Duke looked at his companion, whom he perceived rather confused, while he answered, “I think I have had the honour of seeing the Marquis in my younger days: Did not he marry a Madame de l'Ecluse?”

“He

“He did, Sir,” said the Duke, somewhat surprised the Receiver General of Dunkirk, and a man who had spent the best part of his life in Guadaloupe, should be acquainted with the Marquis’s connections. However, not chusing to make this remark, he thus continued:—“Madame de Neufpont and my mother have been friends from their childhood; they were educated at the Abbey of Conflans, near Paris; and, I have been informed, always promised each other to become related through their children, if they ever had any; therefore I may, with propriety, say I was betrothed to Agnes de Moncove before I was born. It would be difficult to give you an idea of the attachment subsistent between our mothers, though of very different dispositions; indeed, so have been their destinies. They prevailed upon their respective parents to allow them to leave their convent on the same day—they were married on the same day—at the same church—and both by the Archbishop of Sens.”

As

As the Duke made a pause, expecting a reply, and received none, he turned his head, and perceived his companion pale as death, indeed hardly able to breathe, leaning against the side of the carriage. The Duke's exclamation of regret and surprise roused him sufficiently to induce him to make an effort to let down the glass on his side, really alarmed his Grace caught his hand, which was cold as ice; saying, "What can I do for you?—Shall I stop the postillion?—You seem very ill."

De Melac, in a few seconds, was able to say, in an audible whisper, "I shall be better in a moment—a little air will revive me—a sort of giddiness seized me—I have been rather subject to of late."

"Upon my word you ought to take something to remove it," said the Duke; "a long residence in the West-Indies is very apt to debilitate the frame; and, as I once said before, I am certain the air of Flanders is too damp for you;—do follow Bertrand's prescriptions,

prescriptions, and allow him to visit you sometimes; I am sure if it is within the reach of his skill, he will afford you some relief."

Mr. de Melac having rather recovered himself, looked at the Duke, saying, "There are few medical men of whom I have so high an opinion at this moment as your surgeon; but there are complaints that would baffle even the skill of Esculapius: I am sometimes tempted to believe, when I allow myself to reflect upon the past events of my life, there is a sort of fatality presides over human affairs."

"You seem to speak feelingly, my dear Sir," said the Duke; "I had hoped your disorder was not of the nature your speech seems to imply; for, as you very justly observe, whatever affects the spirits is not easily removed; but I am convinced there is great justice in your last observation: indeed I begin to think we are fellow sufferers from the same cause. An extraordinary
VOL. I. L fatality

fatality presided at my birth ; still I know I ought not to repine ; and serious reflections (the necessary result of a strange chain of events, connected with my family history) has very probably kept me out of many follies."

Mr. de Melac's eyes were rivetted upon the Duke while he was speaking ; he seemed fearful of losing a syllable he uttered, though he forbore making any comments upon what he said : and their entrance into Bergues St. Vinox gave a different turn to the conversation. Their horses were ready ; they proceeded very speedily on their journey. Unwilling to return to the subject of Mr. de Melac's illness. The Duke began to talk of Ypres.

"It is a very large and a very dull town, I have been told," said de Melac, "Like most other towns in Austrian Flanders."

"My

“ My dear Sir, I can’t say I am partial to the Low Countries in general ; yet my intended father-in-law’s principal seat is upon these frontiers : indeed within four leagues of Ypres, at Quesnoy ; and, at his death, it is to belong to me. The Bishop of Ypres is nearly related to Madame de Neufpont, and seems very anxious to have me for a neighbour.”

“ And you intend to marry Mademoiselle de Moncove merely from the favourable report you have heard of her beauty and accomplishments, without allowing yourself any time to judge of her disposition yourself ?”

“ Would you think me very much in the wrong, if I were guilty of such precipitancy ?” said the Duke, with a smile.

“ At all events, I should not venture to condemn you.”

“ That would be very wrong, if you thought me to blame ; but if you were acquainted with my mother, you would not wonder at the utmost obedience with which I ever did and ever shall conform to

her will. I may be partial; but, in my opinion, Madame de St. Pirne has not, at this moment, her equal upon earth; to say I love her is too weak an expression compared to my feelings. I am very angry our language does not afford me a stronger term to express the more than filial regard she has ever inspired me with. She has set her heart upon this connection, planned almost during her own childhood; and, with a view solely to promote my felicity, has very often visited Mademoiselle de Moncove at the abbey of Senlis, where she has been educated, and still resides, merely to study her temper and inclinations. Her report has always been extremely favourable. I shall therefore, as far as I am a judge of my own heart, lead the lovely Palmira to the altar with pleasure, and devote the rest of my life to promote her's and Madame de St. Pirne's felicity. She must be almost more than mortal to deprive the latter of the first place in my heart. I know such a confession would excite the mirth of many people; but
you,

you, my dear Sir, are capable of appreciating and doing justice to my feelings.

Deprived, before I saw the light, by the most unheard-of villainy, of a father whose memory I shall never cease to revere, how many heart-rending sighs of my mother's have I witnessed, before I was able to guess the cause of her poignant sorrow!—how many times has she wept over me, till the love I early felt for her, by inducing me to mingle my tears with her's, has made her put a check to grief almost too painful for endurance. The first wish I ever formed was to make her happy—and to see her smile constituted my greatest felicity. When old enough to feel the irreparable loss I had sustained, how often has she expressed her wishes I might resemble the man whose death—worse than death—she as constantly deplored—and whose virtues were her constant theme! How far she has succeeded in her endeavours to make me tread in his steps, she best can tell; and at all

events, while I live, I will endeavour to convince her of my gratitude for the attempt."

Mr. de Melac had remained with his handkerchief in his hand, and frequently looked out of the window as for air, while he wiped away a tear in silence; but as his Grace now made a full stop, it became necessary for him to say something. "With such reasons for marrying you must be happy. How much is the Duchess de St. Pirne to be envied!"

"I wish in that respect my sentiments coincided with your's, my dear Sir. My mother's situation, believe me, has been very far from enviable since my birth; fond as she has ever been of me, it was at that epoch she first knew sorrow: yet, with what truly maternal zeal did she superintend my education! she by no means thought it sufficient to provide me with the best masters in every science; she also chose to see that both they and I fulfilled our respective duties; and was particularly attentive to prevent my mind
'being

being enervated by early adulation—too often the case with youth in my situation. She imposed all these duties upon herself at a time of life, when ninety-nine out of a hundred of her sex would have found very excellent, nay even justifiable, reasons for declining such a task; and have committed me solely to the care of a governor. Indeed the gentleman she selected for what she deemed an important post, proved, as she has often said, a most able auxiliary. During my youth my grandfather also had some share in my education; but, as he would have thought it a crime to contradict me in any respect, and took every other effectual means to spoil me, my mother contrived, though without offending him, to counteract his really kind intentions; yet, at the same time, taught me to love and revere him. The last three years of her life Madame de St. Pirne has spent at the Abbaye St. Antoine, much to my regret; but this was a resolution she had long formed, and chose to execute as soon as I no longer required her

unremitting care; and I don't suppose any thing will ever induce her to quit her present retirement, at least for any length of time."

"I almost wonder that maternal love your Grace so feelingly describes, did not prevent the Duchess from thus secluding herself even from your society: she certainly cannot see you so often in her present retreat as you both must wish."

"I frequently tried, but in vain, to dissuade her from putting her plan into execution; as she is by no means a bigot, though partial to a retired life, and the society a convent affords. Among the nuns, she thinks there must be some very exalted characters; indeed she has favoured me with some anecdotes respecting her most intimate friends at the abbey, that convince me of the truth of her observation. She is not the least confined to the rules of the house, and is in every respect as much her own mistress as while she resided with me; yet the idea, that after eight o'clock in the evening I cannot be admitted to see her, often damps the

the pleasure I feel in her company. She was fearful, had she continued to reside with me, I should have devoted too much of my time to her, and not have seen so much company as I do at present ; and she said, in reply to my earnest remonstrances upon the subject, I was at a time of life to mix in the world, select my own friends, and attend to the social duties my rank and situation imposed ; nor would she be at all flattered were I to spend a day less with my regiment upon her account. On my once saying, a week more or less was not an object in time of peace, her answer was, any deviation from the strict rules of order in those who have it in their power to command obedience, is always noticed by those under their direction. I should be very sorry to see my son bear any resemblance to the present race of fashionable young men ; though I would have him associate with those of his own rank, and endeavour by the force of example, to correct their follies. Be always strict, my Adolphus, in the observance of your own

duty, as neither the common men nor inferior officers can then be displeased at your exacting the same from them."

Such, my dear Sir, are Madame de St. Pirne's principles; and were she a man, I am convinced she would act up to her precepts. I constantly correspond with her twice a week, and I believe she is better acquainted with my heart than I am myself. She continues to encourage me; and is kind enough to express her desire that I should persevere in the course of life I have commenced; and as her approbation is almost necessary to my existence, I trust I shall never deserve her censure. When I am at Paris, I visit her daily at her own hour, and positively place the time I spend in her company among the happiest moments of my life; but I am such an enthusiast in my mother's cause, I forget I am engrossing all the conversation."

"O! pray proceed," said de Melac; I could listen to you for hours with increasing pleasure.

pleasure. I now find I pursued a very wrong method with my son; though few people can have taken more pains than I have done to make him a good man; but there is an instability in his disposition which has rendered all my labours useless; he has no energy of mind, no fixed resolution, no decided character; but, like a weather cock, veers about with every blast; and has such an opinion of himself, it would be a difficult matter to convince him of his follies. He abhors all sort of application;—and you are too well acquainted with the fallacy of the hopes I had formed from the termination of his late adventure.”

“ He is very young, my dear friend. No man’s character can be formed at nineteen; does he like the profession you have chosen for him?”

“ I cannot pretend to tell your Grace I consulted his inclinations in that respect. He was educated for the mercantile line; I therefore placed him in his present situation, as the most suitable to the sort of knowledge

he early acquired. I know it does not meet his approbation; but his inferiority in life precludes him from the army;—his disposition and natural turn for dissipation, renders him still more unfit for the church; and the law requires more application and attention than he would ever have been inclined to bestow upon any profession. The line I have placed him in is both lucrative and honourable, and neither requires chicanery, talents, nor profound knowledge: and if I can but preserve his morals, and prevent his principles from being perverted, he may attain some degree of utility as a *financier*, or farmer general.”

“ I cannot pretend to confute your arguments; your reasons for having placed your son in your own office are unanswerable: but he seems to have a particular predilection for the army; and, as your fortune is large enough not to make his following a very lucrative profession any great object,—why not humour him in that respect?”

“ I am

“ I am convinced he never gave the duties of a soldier one serious thought ; he fancies regimentals would become him, for he is, among his other failings, an intolerable fop : besides, being in the army would entitle him to wear a sword, and he thinks he should have but little to do, and be allowed to mix in the first societies.”

“ You give me very little encouragement,” said the Duke smiling, “ to plead in his behalf : but remember, if he finds himself deceived in some of his expectations, he will not chuse to complain ;—and people are sometimes most punished for forming unreasonable wishes by having them granted. I will not pretend to say, I think he would shine in the cavalry ; but allow me to make use of my interest to obtain him admittance into the infantry.”

“ Your Grace is infinitely too obliging ; and I feel equally grateful, though I must beg leave to decline your kind considerate proposal. His inferiority of birth, as I before observed, makes me particularly averse to his embracing

embracing a profession set apart in France for men of family. Besides, I have very little opinion of his bravery, and know him to be totally deficient in point of skill and knowledge: but, were he to equal you in both respects, even such talents would not eradicate from the minds of his brother officers the lowness of his origin."

"Now don't you allow prejudice to usurp the place of reason, my good Sir? what man of sense will ever reflect upon a man's birth if his education has placed him upon a level, with him as a companion? If you knew what reason I have to abhor such illiberal notions, you would not wonder at my warmth. But may I presume to ask one question? Remember, it proceeds from a friend, strongly interested in your's and your family's welfare, and is not the offspring of idle curiosity—You once told me you had been in the army yourself? did——"

"I was, Sir, for near seven years," said de Melac, hastily interrupting the Duke; "and the *lowness of my origin* forced me to resign
the

the very distinguished post I held—not want of courage or skill in my profession I am vain enough to flatter myself.”

“I have done,” said the Duke; “yet what you have just been saying makes me more than ever condemn those narrow-minded illiberal prejudices which have deprived me of a father, and my country of an officer who would have done honour to any station.”

Seriously hurt to think he had thus again, no doubt, revived some very disagreeable recollection in the mind of Mr. de Melac, the Duke instantly changed the conversation. They overtook Mr. de Melac’s coach within a mile of Ypres, and the two carriages kept together till they arrived at Mr. Vanval’s nephew’s, where they all alighted except the Duke, who just stopped to enquire how the young ladies and Madame de Franval found themselves after their journey. They had a very agreeable ride, the old surgeon said, and, except a little dis-

pute about dress among the young folks, they had all agreed extremely well. This was said in a jocular way : but Bazile, with a very serious face, said they had been all against him.

“ A proof you were in the wrong,” said Mr. de Melac ; “ which, considering the subject of the dispute, does not astonish me.”

The Duke, after promising to call upon them the next day, took a very polite leave of the whole party, and drove on to the Bishop's palace, the most elegant one of its size in the Low Countries. The Bishop received him at the door of his carriage, gave him a most flattering welcome, and then led him into a saloon, where the rest of his company were assembled.

The party consisted of two other dignitaries of the church and four ladies. To them of course his Grace paid the most attention.

The

The Bishop advanced towards the eldest, to whom he thus introduced the new comer.

Your Nephew Elect—my amiable friend—Madame de L'Ecluse—Duke—Abbess of the Chapter of Bourbourg, and sister to Madame la Marquise de Neufpont ;—this lady's cross and broad red ribbon had already informed the Duke she was a canoness, and of what chapter. The usual compliments upon such occasions past between them ; these over, Madame de L'Ecluse turned to a most elegant young person standing next her, equally distinguished by the cross and broad red ribbon, whom, till the Duke had made that discovery, struck him as being the lady he had been first invited to meet, she so exactly answered the description his mother had given him of Palmira de Moncove. The Abbess, wishing to pay the Bishop a compliment, said,

“ I am always proud of following my reverend friend's example ; therefore allow me,
Sir,

Sir, to introduce you next to your sister elect, Madame de Moncove*.”

Ermance de Moncove had been a cannoness for a year or more, and had constantly resided with her aunt at Bourbourg since she became a member of that society: she was just turned of sixteen, and in every respect a regular beauty; but her animated pleasing countenance was far more fascinating than her fine features and sparkling blue eyes, which expressed very forcibly the vivacity of a disposition no monastic rules could repress. Her natural colour was heightened during her introduction to the Duke; upon whom she smiled expressively, while she paid her compliments with the most unaffected gaiety—laughed at his disappointment, which she assured him she had read in his

* Cannonesses of any age are always styled Madame, even before they have taken their last vows; till which period they are allowed to marry—and dress in every respect, cross and ribbon excepted, like women of fashion, when absent from their chapter-houses, or abbeys.

coun-

countenance the moment he caught sight of her cross, and wished her sister had supplied her place. The other females were an elderly lady and her daughter, relations of the Bishop. The necessary forms and ceremonies being over, the Duke took his seat near Ermance, and enquiries after absent friends, anticipations of who would be present at the grand fight on Sunday, filled up the conversation till supper; soon after which they all separated for the night.

The arrangements entered into by the Duchess de St. Pirne and Madame la Marquise de Neufpont concerning their children, have already been mentioned; and it had been agreed between these ladies to introduce the intended lovers to each other at Ypres. Thinking this intended fête would afford them an excellent opportunity of putting their plan into execution, Mr. and Madame de Neufpont and their eldest daughter were to have spent the autumn at Quesnoy:—Madame de St. Pirne had promised
to

to be of the party. Being particularly anxious to witness the first meeting between her son and Mademoiselle de Moncove, yet unwilling to take him by surprise, she had informed him of what was in agitation; and the Bishop had given him a similar hint when he wrote to invite him to the approaching ceremony:—however, the last letter his Grace received from his mother informed him they had been obliged to relinquish their scheme, owing to Madame de Neufpont's not being able to quit Versailles, where she held a very distinguished post, as the lady who was to have represented her during her absence, was prevented from officiating by illness. Still, till the moment the Duke entered the Bishop's saloon, he could not help flattering himself his mother merely meant to occasion him an agreeable surprise; yet he was in some respect glad his meeting with Palmira was postponed; he thought they must both have felt very awkward—introduced to each other before so many strangers—

strangers—all acquainted with what was expected to be the result of the interview.

During the course of the following morning he called upon Mr. de Melac, who assured him they were exceedingly well off as his friend Vanval and family were trying to outvie each other in politeness. Had he found an opportunity he designed to have mentioned his disappointment to Mr. de Melac; but as he saw him in Madame de Franval's and his daughter's presence, he did not chuse to start the subject; and as the Bishop expected most of the nobility in the town to dinner, he was obliged to shorten his visit.

Ermance was placed next the Duke during the repast, and in short seemed consigned to his care by the Bishop and her aunt. The utmost familiarity, therefore, soon prevailed between them. To a very cultivated mind, and every female accomplishment, Ermance joined the utmost gaiety; and a sort of infantine want of knowledge of the world,

world, owing to the recluse life she had hitherto led, highly amusing to him. She was by no means fond of the uniform routine a convent or chapter-house afforded; and ardently wished to mix in the gay scenes she had sometimes heard described by the elder Cannoneses at Bourbourg—intreated the Duke would soon bring matters to a conclusion with her sister, as the rivetting her chains would break her own. Madame de Neufpont having decided she should reside with her as soon as her sister was married, regretted very much the proposed arrangement had been broken off, and bestowed the utmost praises upon Palmira; whom she was certain would make him very happy, as she was not such a mad-cap as herself. The Duke was very much diverted by many of her remarks; and asked her how long she was to stay at Ypres.—“Till the following Monday,” she replied; “nor should she have been invited, if the Bishop had not wanted somebody to beg for the poor during the service, of the congregation.

“Many

“ Many young ladies would feel themselves highly flattered by the evident compliment the Bishop has paid you, *ma petite sœur*,” said the Duke; “ but you don’t seem to enjoy the thoughts of the task.”

“ Far from it, I can assure you, *mon frère*; I am frightened to death whenever I think of it. I wish you would bring me off; do exert your persuasive talents in my behalf—and should your eloquence fail, tell the Bishop you don’t chuse your sister-in-law should expose herself in such a croud.”

“ I am sure you would not wish me to be such an enemy to the poor of Ypres, my dear Ermance; but if you will allow me to accompany you, during the appeal you are requested to make to the feelings of the congregation, I shall be highly flattered.”

“ Now, for a brother, this is being very polite, you don’t know how much your kind offer has already raised my spirits: I feel very much inclined to laugh at the grave conductor who was allotted me—no less a man than the Bishop’s head Chaplain, who, having
once

once been a mendicant friar, I presume his Lordship thought could give me some very useful instructions upon the occasion; yet, don't you think this method of begging for the poor is, in some respects, forcing people to be charitable often contrary to their inclinations?"

"Every one is at liberty to do as he likes, you know, Madame—a *patar** can hurt no one: you are merely requested to make use of intreaties and smiles in behalf of the poor; and who will be able to withstand so fair a pleader? As there will be a great croud assembled, the collection will most likely be large; and if properly applied, will undoubtedly answer the beneficent intentions of the donors."

"You have almost reconciled me to the undertaking," said Ermance; "accept my thanks for the present; I will intreat Palmira to renew them some time hence in my name; for I am sure she will consider your

* The sixth part of a halfpenny.

kind

kind offer as an obligation conferred upon herself; but as my aunt is infinitely more *en fait* of making compliments than I am, or I am afraid ever shall be, I will go and inform her of your kind intentions, that you may have time to arrange a few speeches expressive of your gratitude against the next sees you."

When left to himself, the Duke sighed, he hardly knew why, and breathed a secret wish that Palmira had rather more resemblance to Ermance in point of vivacity than beauty.

The following day, Saturday, was spent at the seat of a neighbouring Nobleman; and the evening concluded with a ball, by the particular desire of Madame de l'Ecluse. The Duke danced with Ermance; nor did they change partners, at her request also, though contrary to the established rule of the country. She had brought Ermance out in some respects without her mother's consent; therefore was particularly desirous to prevent

her forming any acquaintance likely to militate with the views her family might entertain for her future establishment in life. While under the eyes and immediate care of her sister's husband, (for as such she already looked upon the Duke) there could be nothing of that sort to fear. Ermance laughed at her precautions; yet felt perfectly satisfied with her judicious arrangement: she was fonder of dancing than her partner; yet to oblige her they staid late, and returned to Ypres *tete-a-tete* in his Grace's post-chaise.

After they had exchanged their opinions upon the ball, and the company they had met, each of them felt rather at a loss what to say. This was the first time Ermance had ever emerged from the solitude of a convent or chapter-house. From the time she could speak, she had been an inhabitant of the abbey of Sentis, till she removed to Bourbourg; and she began to feel she should return thither with regret. Her sister's marriage was to liberate her from this sort of monastic

monastic confinement; yet even that idea no longer presented itself to her in the pleasing manner it formerly had done:—how happy, she thought, Palmira would be with so amiable a man!—A gentle sigh escaped her, and she felt a sort of depression of spirits she was at a loss to account for. When she had intreated the Duke to hasten his marriage, he had begged her to make use of her influence with her sister to shorten his state of probation. This she had readily promised the first evening they met; and she intended to keep her word; therefore, in two months more, thought she, I shall very probably see Palmira sitting as I am now—but not by the side of her brother-in-law—“The Duchess de Civrac!” she was nearly repeating aloud—“What a pretty name!—I wonder who will fall to my lot!” This reflection made her very unconsciously sigh louder than before, which roused the Duke from a sort of reverie; while she said, “Bless me! I do believe I am going to sleep!”—“With so stupid a companion,” said the Duke, affecting to

laugh, "it would hardly be wonderful, my dear sister—I really believe the warmth of the weather deprives me of the little stock of gallantry I possess." Each now tried to exert themselves; neither were sorry when they reached home—they immediately took leave for the night. As soon as the Duke was alone, his thoughts reverted to Ermance, wished he had been first introduced to Palmira: she might, and he had been led to believe was, as handsome as Ermance; but if she did not possess an equal share of vivacity, her countenance could not be so animated; Palmira was taller, Madame de l'Ecluse had told him; but Ermance had not done growing, and was far from short of her age. There was certainly a great resemblance between her and Ermance de Melac in point of disposition: the latter had always been one of his favourites. Such were his reflections before he went to sleep, and he found it rather difficult to forget himself; Ermance presented herself to him under so many different aspects; she became the

subject of his sleeping as well as waking reveries : yet he was convinced he was only interested in her future welfare ; in short, felt the same sort of regard for her he did for Ermence ; and was determined to do all in his power to promote her happiness. As she seemed very much attached to Palmira, he thought it would be a pity to separate them ; at least till Ermance married : therefore, if Madame de Neufpont was of his way of thinking, she should live with them—so gay a companion would enliven them both. After a very restless night he rose early, and thought he would step and ask Mr. de Melac how he did before breakfast ; when, within a few paces of the door, he was met by Bazile, of whom he enquired after his father and sisters. Mr. de Melac and the surgeon were gone to take a walk, he said, and his sisters were so lazy, they were not yet come down stairs. The Duke therefore wished him a good morning ; and having intreated he would give his compliments to his father and the young ladies,

was

was turning from him ; but it was no such easy matter to get rid of Bazile ; he kept close to his side ; and though he had most of the conversation to himself, did not chuse to take the hint.

“ Did your Grace ever inhabit so dull a town as Ypres ? Our host and his family are true Flamands—some of them positively can’t speak French !—Did you ever hear of such stupid beings ? ”

“ Do you speak Flemish, Mr. de Melac ? ” said the Duke.

Oh heavens ! no : why ’tis a mere barbarous jargon exploded in all polite societies.”

“ It is the language of the country, Sir,” said the Duke ; “ and I can’t conceive the inhabitants of Austrian Flanders and Brabant deserve to be ridiculed for not being acquainted with any other, more than an Englishman, Spaniard, or Italian, for speaking their respective dialects.”

Bazile

Bazile was accustomed to shrink before the Duke's penetrating eyes. The sensation this speech gave rise to, was therefore nothing new; and it totally failed of the desired end, as he continued to vent his spleen against the Vanvals:—"They were as fond of tea as the English, but did not know near so well how to make it; and their coffee was the most intolerable mixture ever set before decent people; they dilute it with water till it has neither colour nor taste; in short, they are as unacquainted with French manners and customs as if they lived in Russia;—and as for dress, you never saw such figures as they make of themselves."

The Duke felt very much tempted to tell him he was very ungrateful to people who, by his father's account, were doing all in their power to make them welcome, but thought it was not worth his while to endeavour to correct him, therefore only shewed his disapprobation of his remarks by not making any answer, and walked on very fast till he reached

reached the palace gates, where he once more wished him a very good morning. Bazile chose to stop till the porter came to the gate, in hopes the Duke would ask him in to see the palace, which he had heard very much praised by the Vanvals, but was disappointed in his expectations, though he knew his father had been even entreated to visit him during his stay at the Bishop's; but Mr. de Melac, ever fearful of intruding, had not chose to take advantage of the invitation.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



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